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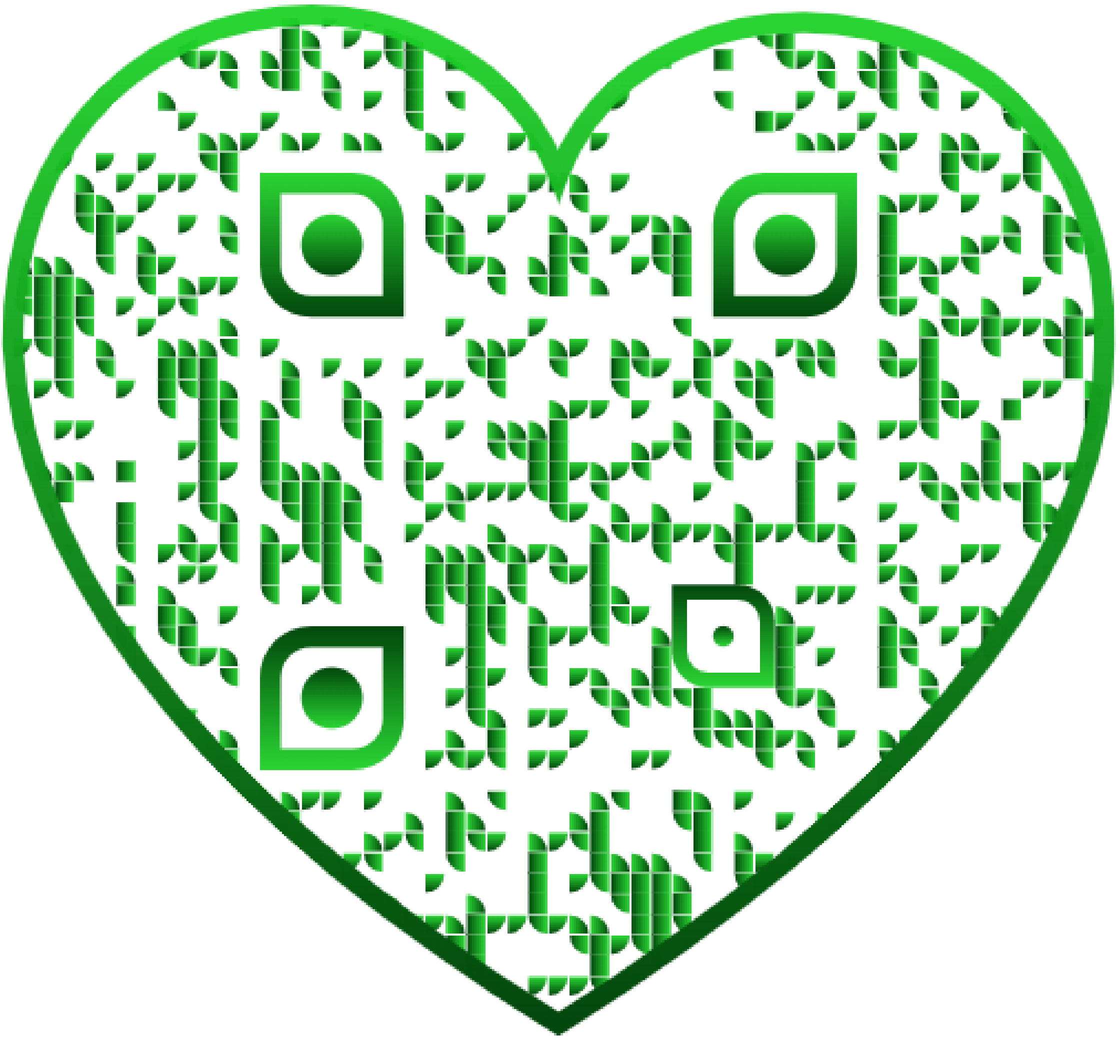
FUTURE
ISSUE 306



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SMITH / KOTZEN

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Have you ever stopped for a second to think about Peter Frampton's amazing career? No? Well, to be completely candid I'm not so sure I really had, either. He's always been the respected musician, always there, always delivering the goods that I also just sorta took for granted... But, as our feature interview this issue proves, he has had an unrivalled, incredible rock'n'roll life – from being lifelong pals with Bowie, to his teen-idol time in The Herd, to rockers Humble Pie with Steve Marriott, and having one of the biggest albums of the 70s (one of the biggest-selling live albums of all time), to hanging out with Beatles and frequenting film sets, and *so* much more. But enough of my wafffle, let's let Frampton himself do all the talking: turn to page 22 and marvel for yourself.

That's not all, of course. This month we also catch up with The Cult's Ian Astbury and Billy Duffy, hang out with Clutch, bring you the whole bloody story of W.A.S.P., and so much more.

Until next month...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor

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This month's contributors

BILL DeMAIN
Nashville-based writer/musician Bill was delighted to hang out for hours on Zoom with Peter Frampton, hearing stories about Humble Pie and David Bowie (p22). When he's not talking to rock legends for us, Bill plays guitar with the jazzy pop band Crackerboots. He's also a correspondent for BBC Radio Scotland. On September 20 he'll be guest-hosting that station's *Another Country.*

ROB HUGHES
Currently a twice-weekly guest on Marc Riley's BBC 6Music show, where he digs through vintage copies of *NME, Sounds, Disc* and *Melody Maker,* Rob has been a regular contributor to *Classic Rock*'s pages for well over a decade now. This month he salutes The Cult in the company of the enigmatic Ian Astbury and the no-nonsense Billy Duffy (p48).

JOHNNY SHARP
Johnny (who also writes for *Prog, Uncut* and *Record Collector*), spoke to Clutch for this issue (p38), and found the Maryland band to be a rarity among those he's interviewed: "They seem to have found true creative freedom," he says, "because unlike many artists they're not constantly desperate to get to 'the next level' – they're happy with a modest but fiercely loyal fan base, so they can do what they like."

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BLACK SABBATH... BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT?

Birmingham MPs demand the band are honoured.

Following Iommi and Osbourne's appearance at the Commonwealth Games, seven MPs representing the city of Birmingham wrote to the Queen to request that Black Sabbath be honoured for their services to music. Khalid Mahmood, Labour representative for Perry Barr, is backed by MPs from across the spectrum, including Labour's Jess Phillips and Tory Gary Sambrook. Together they believe that Her Majesty should "recognise the great contribution made by these fine and ground-breaking musicians, who were made in Birmingham and who have not just entertained Birmingham, the United Kingdom and the whole of the Commonwealth, but perhaps the world."

And *Pigs* might fly: Tony Iommi and Ozzy Osbourne share a stage again, at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

All The World's A Stage

Ozzy and Tony reunite for Commonwealth Games ceremony, Geddy and Alex play together live again.

Four of classic rock's biggest stars surprised their fans by returning to a stage last month. Ozzy Osbourne and Tony Iommi starred in an eleventh-hour cameo as part of the celebrations to close the Commonwealth Games, held in Black Sabbath's home city of Birmingham. And across the pond in Denver, surviving Rush members Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson played together again for the first time in public during the 25th birthday party for the irreverent animated TV show *South Park*.

Iommi got the show on the road alone on July 28 by joining Duran Duran at the opening ceremony of the Games at the Alexander Stadium, where he appeared alongside saxophonist Soweto Kinch for the 'dream sequence' performance of the song *Hear My Voice*. Having watched him on TV, Ozzy tweeted: "Tony Iommi, I was proud to see you tonight at the opening of the Commonwealth Games in our home town of Birmingham."

Little did we know that within ten days, Ozzy would fly in secretly from America to fulfil a pledge made back in February 2017, when the singer said it would be "fantastic" to be a part of the ceremony, "[either] with Black Sabbath or on my own". His reasoning was simple: "We're all Brummies after all."

During the countdown to the grand finale, almost nobody knew that Osbourne, who had recently undergone a "life-altering" operation, would be present, either as a spectator or a participant. His wife and manager Sharon later revealed that although the subject had been raised quite a while before, just six days separated the first phone call and arriving in the country and beginning his preparation. "It was just incredible," said Sharon, describing Ozzy as a "born performer" and a "working-class hero". She added: "He's not a rocker with an island somewhere. He has always loved Birmingham."

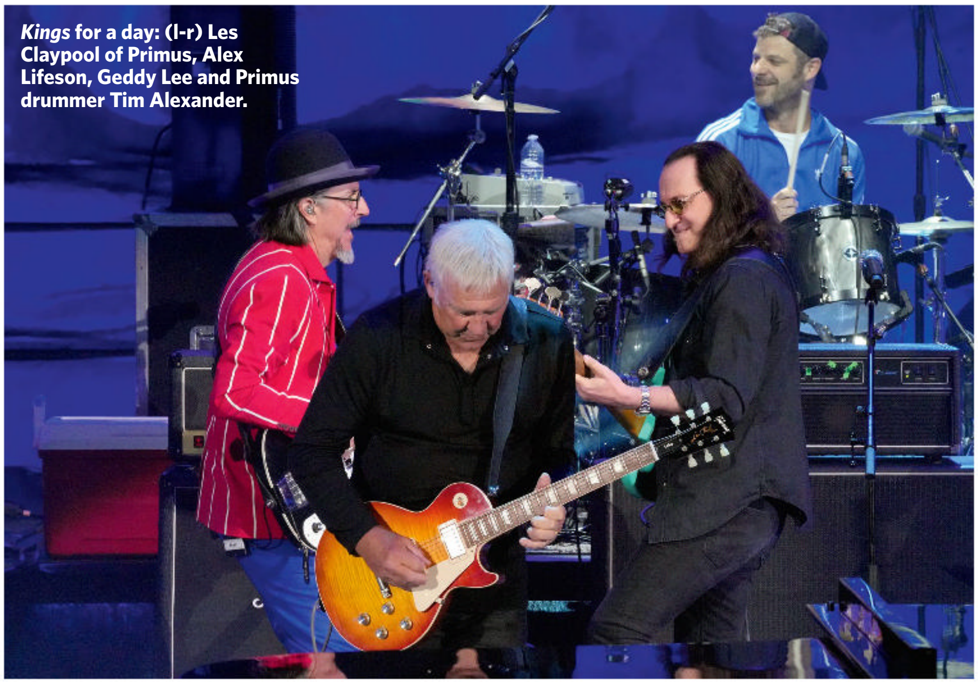
Osbourne and Iommi performed the closing section of *Iron Man* and a full-length *Paranoid*, the latter climaxing as fireworks lit up the sky. They were joined by Adam Wakeman, Sabbath's keyboard player, filling in on bass, and Tommy Clufetos returning as drummer. Iommi later revealed that Sabbath bassist Geezer Butler had been unable to participate for two reasons.

"Geezer hadn't been well with covid," he said. "He'd been on holiday to Kenya and to Italy and had had an accident on a boat, cracking or breaking a rib about three weeks ago, so he was not quite [able] come over to play. It's a shame."

An air of subterfuge also surrounded Lee and Lifeson's return to the public arena. Both are long-term fans of *South Park*, and when invited by Les Claypool, whose band Primus had been touring playing Rush's 1977 album *A Farewell To Kings* in its entirety, to not only attend but to bring along their guitars, the pair willingly accepted. Together they grinned their way through *Closer To The Heart*, with series creator Matt Stone on drums.

"This is one of the most amazing moments of my life," Claypool told the audience. "Matt Stone, is this one of the most amazing moments of your life? Look at who is standing in front of you. It's Geddy and Alex!"

Lifeson later commented: "[The experience] was bittersweet, in a way. I know there were a lot of tears in the audience. It was very moving for us. I didn't realise, you know. We are sort of getting on with our lives." **DL**



Kings for a day: (l-r) Les Claypool of Primus, Alex Lifeson, Geddy Lee and Primus drummer Tim Alexander.

GETTY x2

This month The Dirt was compiled by Dave Everley, Ian Fortnam, Rich Hobson, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, Will Simpson, Philip Wilding

RIP

Thank you... and good night.

Judith Durham
July 3, 1943 – August 5, 2022

Australia-born Judith Durham was a lead singer and a writer for the internationally acclaimed folk-meets-pop act The Seekers, whose many hits include *I'll Never Find Another You, Georgy Girl* and *A World Of Our Own*. Durham had two spells with the group, from 1962–1968 and 1992–2019. She was born asthmatic, which led to measles and bronchiectasis, the chronic lifelong affliction which ultimately claimed her at 79.

Lamont Dozier
June 16, 1941 – August 8, 2022

The famed singer, songwriter and producer Lamont Dozier has died aged 81. Cause of death has not been announced. A member of the Holland–Dozier–Holland writing team, he was born in Detroit and co-wrote a number of chart-toppers for the likes of The Four Tops, the Isley Brothers and The Supremes. Along with his partners he was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 1990.

Jerry Allison
August 31, 1939 – August 22, 2022

Texan-born Jerry Allison found fame in the late 1950s as the drummer with Buddy Holly & The Crickets, and co-wrote two of their most famous songs, *That'll Be The Day* and *Peggy Sue*. He later became a session musician for artists including the Everly Brothers. According to rock folklore, Paul McCartney and John Lennon chose The Beatles as a band name as a tribute to The Crickets.

Olivia Newton-John
26 September 1948 – 8 August 2022

Though not strictly a classic rocker, the passing of Olivia Newton-John at 73 was mourned by Rod Stewart, Richard Marx, John Farnham and Elton John among many others. The former Danger Danger guitarist Andy Timmons, who worked as her musical director, posted: "People think of Olivia as angelic, talented, beautiful, funny, intelligent, compassionate and hard-working… to which I always reply: She's even better than that."

Bill Pitman
February 12, 1920 – August 11, 2022

Bill Pitman, once a member of legendary session collective the Wrecking Crew, has died at the age of 102. In a glittering career Pitman played guitar for a *Who's Who* of popular music, including the Beach Boys, Elvis, Bob Dylan, Frank Sinatra, James Brown, The Monkees and Barbara Streisand. No cause of death has been

Mo Ostin

March 27, 1927 – July 31, 2022

The record industry executive who signed Jimi Hendrix, Van Halen, Neil Young, The Kinks, Fleetwood Mac, Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison, Prince, Madonna, The Grateful Dead, Red Hot Chili Peppers, R.E.M. and many others who became stars has died in his sleep of natural causes at the age of 95. A self-effacing giant of the industry, Mo Ostin was known for the unflagging support he gave to his artists.

Born Morris Meyer Ostrofsky, the New Yorker worked at a number of record labels, including Reprise, Warner Brothers, Verve and DreamWorks. He was chairman and chief executive officer of Warner/Reprise from 1972 to 1994. Ostin was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2003 by Neil Young, Paul Simon and *Saturday Night Live* creator Lorne Michaels.

"Mo Ostin was behind the music," Young said during the Hall Of Fame induction. "He was behind making it happen, he was behind letting it happen however it was going to happen, and he was behind keeping it happening. And that's why Reprise and Warner Brothers were the greatest label ever in music, as far as I'm concerned. That man there."

The first rock act Ostin signed to Reprise was The Kinks. He snapped up Jimi Hendrix in 1967 after seeing him perform at the Monterey Pop Festival. In total Ostin spent 31 years at Warner/Reprise.

"One of the great things about Warners, I always felt, was our emphasis and priority was always about the music," Ostin told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1994.

Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea hailed Ostin as "the greatest person I ever met in the music business". Fellow music industry executive Clive Davis described him "one of a kind", adding: "Yes, he and I competed with each other for many years, but my friendship with him extended to our respective families and I will always cherish our very close relationship." **FL/DL**

Steve Grimmett

August 19, 1959 – August 15, 2022

The lead singer with Grim Reaper, Onslaught and Lionsheart, among others has passed away unexpectedly at 62.

Born in Swindon, Steve Grimmett's first band was the short-lived Medusa, before hooking up with the Droitwich-based Grim Reaper in 1982. The following year he sang on the debut album by Chateaux, and later Grim Reaper's *See You In Hell, Fear No Evil* and *Rock You To Hell*, after which he was with highly regarded UK thrashers Onslaught. He then fronted Lionsheart and made five albums with them. He was also considered as a replacement for Bruce Dickinson when he left Iron Maiden.

In January 2017 Grimmett had his right leg partially amputated in order to "remove an infection from his foot and bones".

"I've no regrets whatsoever," he told VWMusic earlier this year. "I should by rights be a millionaire, but I haven't got a penny to my name. I'm on welfare at the moment because of covid. I've never received a penny – not one penny – from Grim Reaper.

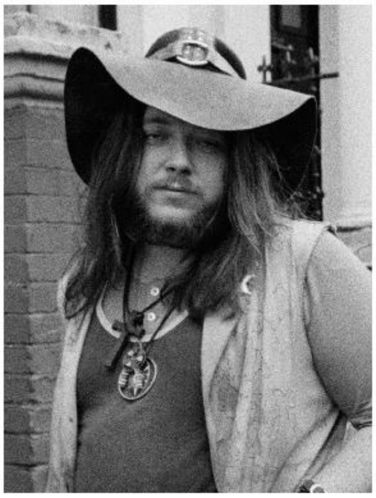
"I still love getting up there and watching the smiling faces in front of me" he continued. "That does it all for me."

Original Grim Reaper guitarist Nick Bowcott: commented: "What a man, what a voice, what an honour, what a pleasure." **FL/DL**

MO OSTIN: GETTY; STEVE GRIMMETT: ALAMY

Nicky Moore

June 21, 1947 – August 3, 2022



The larger-than-life singer who replaced Bruce Dickinson in the NWOBHM band Samson has died at the age of 75. Nicky Moore had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and lived out his final years in a nursing home.

Born in the West Country, Moore began his career in rock bands in '69 when he co-founded Hackensack. After they split, in 1974 he joined Tiger, whose line-up featured the session muso 'Big' Jim Sullivan on guitar.

The call to join Samson came in late 1981. Moore and Dickinson couldn't have been any more different. Moore was a big man with an ever bigger voice. His blues-laden delivery propelled Samson in a new, earthier direction with their 80s albums *Before The Storm* and *Don't Get Mad, Get Even*. After Samson, Moore fronted Mammoth, who included former Gillan bassist John McCoy.

As well having the band From Behind with (recently deceased) former Nazareth guitarist Manny Charlton, a solo career and his group the Blues Corporation, Moore was also the singer in Electric Sun, with former Scorpions guitarist Uli Jon Roth.

He reunited with Samson from 2000 to 2002. Moore's erstwhile Samson bandmate, guitarist Paul Samson, died from cancer in 2002, followed five years later by bassist Chris Aylmer. **DL**

Ray Majors and Sandy Dillon

July 16, 1949 – August 2022

Although details were scarce at press time, guitarist Ray Majors has passed away, together with his singer-songwriter partner Sandy Dillon.

Born on July 16, 1949, Ray played guitar first with Opal Butterfly and then Hackensack, Mott and that band's spin-off British Lions, and the Yardbirds-associated group Box Of Frogs. He toured with John Coghlan's Diesel Band and played on that band's only album, *Partners In Crime*.

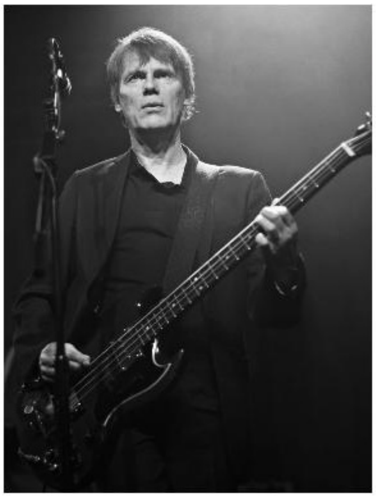
Sandy Dillon was born in Massachusetts in 1960. Her career began when she was signed by David Bowie's former manager, Tony DeFreis, who spotted her playing Janis Joplin on Broadway. From 1995 she released several albums, the final one being *Shipwrecked* in 2013.

News of the pair's deaths was announced by Majors' son Carl Shaw, who posted on Facebook: "Ray and Sandy have never been far apart, they passed on within days of each other, and receiving the phone call about this was a heavy burden. But the one positive thing I can see is that they went together."

Former Mott The Hoople/Mott keyboard player Morgan Fisher said: "How you both suddenly left we don't yet know, but I miss you both terribly." **DL**

Darryl Hunt

May 4, 1950 – August 8, 2022



GETTY x3

Shane McGowan has led the tributes to Darryl Hunt, The Pogues' long-time bassist who had died at the age of 72. No cause of death has been released. Pogues leader MacGowan wrote on Instagram: "I am very, very sorry that Darryl has passed away, we will all miss him, he was a really great person and friend and a great bass player."

Hampshire-born Hunt was a member of The Pogues' inner circle, his duties involving mixing their live sound and driving the van. After filling in for Cait O'Riordan, he became her permanent replacement when she left the group in 1986.

Hunt played on the following year's smash hit and perennial Christmas song *Fairytale Of New York*, and brought several songs to The Pogues' catalogue, including *Modern World*, *Big City* and *Love You 'Till The End*, the latter featuring in the films *Mystery, Alaska* and *PS I Love You*, before the group disbanded in 1996.

Hunt continued to work with Pogues Andrew Ranken and Spider Stacy in The Vendettas, and was part of The Pogues' reunion in 2001. He then remained with them until a second dissolution 13 years later.

Spider Stacy paid tribute to Hunt on Twitter, writing: "This is wretched. See you around the way, Daz." **DL**

revealed, although the New Jersey-ite had been recovering from an accident that left him with a fractured spine.

David Muse

July 27, 1949 – August 6, 2022

Best known as a member of American soft-rock band Firefall and southern rockers the Marshall Tucker Band, multi-instrumentalist David Muse appeared on more than 25 albums during a career that spanned five decades. The 73-year-old lost a long battle with cancer. "While we are heartbroken, we take solace in the knowledge that he is no longer in pain," said a statement from Firefall.

Eric Bouillette

June 29, 1967 – August 21, 2022

Eric Bouillette was born in the South of France, and since 2018 was guitarist, violinist and a multi-instrumentalist member of the UK prog-rockers The Room. The news of his passing was broken by his wife Anne Claire, who wrote: "You always naturally saw the good side and the talent present in everyone, and you allowed all the people who have ever had the chance to cross your path to bring that positive out. You brought happiness just by being you, joy bringer."

Michael Bloodgood

Died July 29, 2022

Stryper's Michael Sweet has expressed sadness at the passing of another stalwart of the Christian metal scene. Michael Bloodgood formed the band that carried his surname in Seattle in 1984. He had suffered a severe hemorrhagic stroke back in February, and was 69 when he died. "Michael's vision and his band Bloodgood helped shape and pave the road ahead for Christian metal," said Sweet. "He was the perfect representative of The Lord."

Robert Monroe Heathcote

May 27, 1964 – July 24, 2022

Former Suicidal Tendencies bassist Robert Monroe Heathcote has died at the age of 58 from injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident. A band member from 1987 to '89, he played on just one album by the Los Angeles-based band, their debut for Epic Records (and third overall) *How Will I Laugh Tomorrow When I Can't Even Smile Today*, before being replaced by future Ozzy Osbourne and now Metallica bassist Robert Trujillo.

Ted Kirkpatrick

May 22, 1960 – August 19, 2022

Although recognised principally as the drummer with Tourniquet, the prog-thrash band to which he dedicated more than three decades, acting as a principal composer, the Wisconsin musician began his career as a short-lived touring member of US doom-metallers Trouble. A skilled player of a variety of instruments, including flute, banjo, dulcimer and bazouki, Kirkpatrick was 62 years old when he succumbed to idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis.

Joni To Record A New Album?

Mitchell insider says: "I wouldn't be surprised."

Following Joni Mitchell's surprising live comeback at this year's Newport Jazz Festival, the singer-songwriter's first full-length show since 2002, it seems she is planning new music. Mitchell had been out of the public eye after suffering a brain aneurysm in 2015 which left her unable to talk or walk. The 78-year-old re-taught herself how to play guitar by watching online tutorials.

Despite being nervous, Mitchell enjoyed the experience of playing live again so much that she'd love to push on. Her most recent album, *Shine*, was released in 2007.

When *Mojo* asked her ex-husband, musician/producer Larry Klein, whether Joni might record any new music, he replied: "I wouldn't be surprised. She's working at regaining the ability to play guitar, and what that means is that she'll start experimenting, and who knows what will come with that." **DL**

Joni Mitchell: on the road to recovery – and hopefully the studio.

Ronnie Dio Film Out Soon

Documentary to be shown for two nights only.

Dreamers Never Die, the career-spanning documentary on the life and career of Ronnie James Dio, is to be screened in UK and Irish cinemas on September 28 and October 2. For a list of participating theatres go to diodreamersneverdie.com

The film follows Dio's rise from a 1950s doo-wop crooner to his earliest rock days in Elf and Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow, to replacing Ozzy Osbourne in Black Sabbath, and finally cementing his star status with his self-named own band, and includes previously unseen footage and interview tributes from Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler, Vinny Appice, Glenn Hughes, Lita Ford, Rob Halford and more.

Also look out for *Reflections Of A Guitar Icon*, the new documentary on the late, great guitarist Randy Rhoads, which covers Rhoads's path to Ozzy's band, and the tragic accident that took his life at the age of just 25. Spoken-word contributions come from Ozzy, plus the late trio of Edward Van Halen, Kevin DuBrow and Gary Moore, and Randy's mother Delores. It's available now via DVD, Blu-ray and download-to-own. **DL**

NEWS

Next summer's **Wacken Open Air Festival** sold out all 80,000 tickets in five hours after an early announcement of its line-up so far, which includes headliners Iron Maiden.

Joe Walsh is calling time on the **James Gang**, the band he left to join the Eagles in 1971, with a charity farewell show in Columbus, Ohio that co-stars Dave Grohl, Nine Inch Nails, The Black Keys and The Breeders .

A disbelieving **Dee Snider** has mocked yet another politician who commandeered Twisted Sister's track *We're Not Gonna Take It* for a cause Snider deplores. "Hey idiots! Read the first line," he told Arizona governor candidate Kari Lake. "'*We've got the right to CHOOSE!*' This is a PRO-CHOICE anthem!"

Jason 'Jase' Edwards of Wolfsbane has been diagnosed with a bone marrow cancer for which there is currently no cure. The guitarist's condition is treatable, however, and he has begun a first cycle of chemotherapy, which will be followed by a stem cell transplant.

Ozzy Osbourne has revealed his final conversation with **Lemmy** (pictured) just before the Motörhead leader passed away in 2015. He says that Lemmy told him: "I'm probably going to die, I suppose. Never thought I'd make seventy, so I did good… I could have lived a lot longer and taken care of myself, but I lived my life the way I want to live and I ain't got no regrets."

WELCOME BACK

The Godfathers

With a new line-up behind him, Peter Coyne reckons the band pack "a whole lot of rock'n'roll dynamite".

Since arising from the ashes of The Sid Presley Experience in the South London of 1985, The Godfathers have dealt in a particularly savage, tunes-based strain of sharp-suited, punk-edged rock'n'roll. Upon signing to Epic in '87, they released the classic *Birth School Work Death*, toured extensively and made significant *Billboard* chart inroads.

Thirty-five frantic years later, and founder/frontman Peter Coyne has returned once more with a brand new line-up and an album (*Alpha Beta Gamma Delta*) that finds the quintet in truly dynamite form.

In 2019 you had something of a night of the long knives and dispensed with the services of the whole band. What happened to cause that?
Initially when people join a band they're a hundred per cent up for anything, but after a while you learn who they actually are. Crazy decisions were being made thatI didn't agree with, until I felt like a passenger in a car I should have been driving. So I took all the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune from that line-up, until I couldn't take any more. I tried to have discussions with them, to warn them, but they didn't want to make a new album.

No regrets?
I've got no regrets whatsoever about getting rid of those guys, because this Godfathers line-up is far superior; we can get along, write songs and make new records. I can't be in a band that's static, where all you do is play what you done in 1987. No way. The most important Godfathers record to me is always the next one.

Has the band always been primarily based on your personal vision, and are you The Godfathers in much the same way that Lemmy was Motörhead?
This is a real band, a proper band. Every song on the album was written with various other people in the group. They all bring something to the party. I bring a whole lot, of course I do, and the overall vision is mine, but to do it without these guys would be impossible. Jon Priestley [bass] was in The Damned and he's a fantastic producer, Billy [Duncanson, drums] and Richie [Simpson, guitar] were in this great up-and-coming band called The Heavy Drapes, until their singer died in 2018, and Wayne [Vermaak] is a brilliant guitarist. As a line-up it gels really well, there's a certain chemistry there and a whole lot of rock'n'roll dynamite.

> **"We made brilliant records and still make brilliant records."**

Might The Godfathers have sold more records in the eighties if you'd worn the accepted spandex uniform of contemporary corporate rock?
The Godfathers always looked like a classy band, and I think our image lasts a lot better then all of those stupid people with poodle hairdos. They looked absolutely ridiculous then and they look even worse now.

Would you say The Godfathers were a band out of time?
We stood out, maybe like a sore thumb, but made brilliant records and still make brilliant records. Not many bands from that time are still making albums as great as *Alpha Beta Gamma Delta*, as good as the stuff they did in their prime. I've no complaints about anything. It was a dream to be in a band, and if you can do it, make it real and still keep doing it, you've realised your ambition. **IF**

Alpha Beta Gamma Delta is available now via Cargo.

JONI MITCHELL: GETTY; LEMMY: KEVIN NIXON

HIGH HOPES

Spirit Adrift

Meet the trad-metal revivalists who went from doomed to heavy metal's rising stars.

It's May this year, and the Black Heart pub in London is jam-packed with rockers awaiting a hotly tipped American band about to make their live debut in the capital. "They just packed in as many people as they possibly could. It was *insane*," enthuses Spirit Adrift founder Nate Garrett. "After the last encore I was crowd-surfed across the venue – not necessarily of my own accord!"

Spirit Adrift had to delay crossing the Atlantic when their May 2020 tour supporting Corrosion Of Conformity was postponed (later cancelled), then again when travel restrictions prevented them supporting Orange Goblin last December. Even the triumphant London debut almost slipped through their fingers when a tanker tipped on the M4, the band making it to the gig by the skin of their teeth. Heavy metal is all about persevering, however, and Spirit Adrift did just that when they enthralled the audience with the kind of trad-metal tunes that would have ruled the airwaves circa 1983.

Plying a stylistic through-line running from Black Sabbath to Metallica via Priest and Maiden, Spirit Adrift clearly owe a sizable debt to the metal gods of the late 70s and early 80s, but they don't share the same appetite for excess. In fact, Garrett started the band while going through recovery for alcoholism.

Freshly sober but without a band to channel his creative energies, he began recording his ideas, ultimately singing and playing everything himself on Spirit Adrift's debut EP and album. An offer from Roadburn festival founder Walter Hoeijmakers prompted Garrett to seek out other musicians, resulting not only in Spirit Adrift becoming a touring entity, but also an evolution in the band's sound.

"I want to arrive and kick the shit out of people, but you can't do that with sprawling, epic twelve-minute doom songs," he says. "So I started writing songs specifically for live performances, based on the arena metal bands I loved."

Although the likes of Metallica and Pantera are obvious reference points, the decision to include covers of ZZ Top and Lynyrd Skynyrd deep cuts on newest release *20 Centuries Gone* is a reflection of how expansive Spirit Adrift's sound is. But the way Garrett sees it, the timing couldn't be better for classic-style heavy metal to make a comeback. Especially after Metallica's pop-culture revival after appearing in *Stranger Things*.

"I think it's cool as shit!" Garrett says excitedly. "I got into music through the *Forrest Gump* soundtrack; I didn't have a cool older sibling or parent that could help me discover that stuff. So when I saw the scene of the guy playing *Master Of Puppets*, all I could think was: 'I can't wait to see what bands come five, ten years from now.'" **RH**

20 Centuries Gone is out now via Century Media.

FOR FANS OF...

"We have such a variety of stuff in the DNA for Spirit Adrift, but I'd say that means we're basically *Heaven And Hell* by Black Sabbath. They were already a great band - the greatest - but when they got Martin Birch and Dio involved, it took things to another level. They were a powerhouse in every department."

SHANE WESLEY/PRESS

"We're basically *Heaven And Hell* by Black Sabbath."

MY FIRST LOVE

Nine Inch Nails
THE FRAGILE
By Steven Wilson

Prog's man of our times on a "huge monolithic statement record".

"I got into Nine Inch Nails with the previous album, *The Downward Spiral*. I can't remember why I particularly picked up on them, but it totally blew me away when I got it in 1994. Production-wise it sounded like nothing I'd ever heard before. And I've always loved industrial music, very repetitive music. That's something I've kind of grown up with too. Trent Reznor was using industrial music and fusing it with the great albums I grew up with in the seventies, the progressive rock and concept albums. He was doing that in a completely contemporary way. The same kind of ambition and a very alienated perspective on the world, almost in the tradition of people like Roger Waters in his lyrical perspective. And no less ambitious when it came to making huge monolithic statement records. *The Fragile* is really the zenith of that for Trent Reznor.

"The scale of *The Fragile* is huge. He worked on the record for five years, and there's something about it. Two hours of music that has everything from instrumental interludes and instrumental overtures to conceptual continuity and themes that would reappear in later songs. It seems to have a scale and a conceptual unity that maybe the other records hint at.

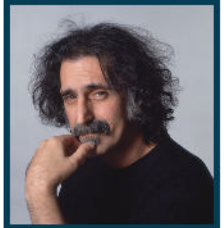
"Reznor thinks of an album on a higher level than a collection of catchy radio songs. He's created a whole aesthetic vision that's totally his own." **JE**

NEWS

Metallica sold more concert tickets (19,468,173) over the past four decades than any other heavy metal band, according to a report published by live music industry bible *Pollstar*. The list, topped by the Rolling Stones, also includes Guns N' Roses (at number 23), AC/DC (27), Kiss (41), Def Leppard (42) and Iron Maiden (44).

Rock Goddess have announced their retirement from live performances. Formed in 1977, the pioneering all-female British trio cite "logistical and financial obstacles" for their decision, with a bout of covid that forced them to cancel a spot at the Barcelona RockFest in Spain "the straw that broke the camel's back".

Bryan 'Brain' Mantia has spoken about how he embraced the "chaos" during his time with **Guns N' Roses**. "Everyone else was freaking out: 'Oh my god, Axl is two hours late!'" the drummer told *Rolling Stone*. "I was eating an ice cream: 'Who cares? Maybe we won't even play! That's even better! As long as the money comes, who gives a shit?' I was so into the vibe of that."



A new archive release from **Frank Zappa** is out on October 14. Produced by the late guitarist/composer's son Ahmet and vault keeper Joe Travers, *Zappa '75: Zagreb/Ljubljana* is a 27-track live recording comprising almost two and a half hours of previously unreleased music sourced from two shows by Zappa's band the Mothers Of Invention.

WELCOME BACK

Goo Goo Dolls

They're back with a new album partly inspired by the state of their USA home. And it's not a smiley record.

Ensconcing themselves in splendid isolation in the remote Dreamland Studios outside of Woodstock in New York State paid off for the Goo Goo Dolls and their thirteenth album, *Chaos In Bloom*. Born partly from lockdown blues and not a little frustration with the state of their nation, the Johnny Rzeznik-produced album is the band's best in some time. *Classic Rock* caught up with Rzeznik – the band's guitarist/vocalist – pre-show in Seattle.

You finally self-produced a Goo Goo Dolls album. Is your ego now completely out of control?
Ha! You know, I just wanted the time to experiment and to create in a way that we have not had the opportunity to do over the past few records. I love those records, but I wanted something different. I was watching videos of us playing live on YouTube, and I'm like, well, you know, the songs sound a lot tougher live, and I thought, well, we need to capture this stuff.

"It's difficult to speak about politics as a musician."

You drove your own vintage equipment coast to coast to get the album sound you wanted.
I have this massive collection of vintage recording equipment, and I didn't trust anybody to ship it for me. So my friend John and I put it in a truck and we drove from California to New York in the middle of winter on this four-day adventure.

The *Chaos* album has a darker edge lyrically than some fans might expect. Was at least some of the record's mood impacted by lockdown?
On one hand, I got to spend a lot of time with my little girl, and working on the record helped me keep sane, so there was that. But part of the record is a reflection of the time, and a lot of the songs are not just about the pandemic, but what's going on socially.

So after driving coast to coast across the USA, how's the state of the nation looking to you?
It's difficult to speak about politics as a musician. Theoretically, you can alienate half your audience. But we're so divided as a nation, awash in a sea of disinformation. And even if I was a Republican, I would disavow Trump and Trumpism. Those things are not the core beliefs of that party. I believe that our country is moving backwards, and that's frightening to me. Then there's climate change, huge inequality, all of it.

Hence a song like *Let The Sun*? I mean, initially it sounds like classic Goo Goo Dolls…
And it's about the economic inequality in America, I know. But I can't ignore that. More and more money in the US keeps getting funnelled into fewer and fewer hands. Why does one guy get to have two hundred billion dollars? To put that in perspective, we all want to be a millionaire, but that guy became a millionaire two hundred thousand times over. It's fucking absurd, isn't it? It's grotesque. The pigs at the top keep the cash.

What would the young Johnny Rzeznik who wrote *Superstar Carwash* have made of all this?
I just feel like I'm at a point in my life in my career where it's like, well, I have a little more freedom to do exactly what I want, and that's where I am and who I am. But I think that kid would have written about this stuff too, it's just that these times now, they're so unprecedented. **PW**

Chaos In Bloom is out now via Warner Bros Records

GOO GOO DOLLS: CLAIRE MARIE VOGEL/PRESS; FRANK ZAPPA: GETTY

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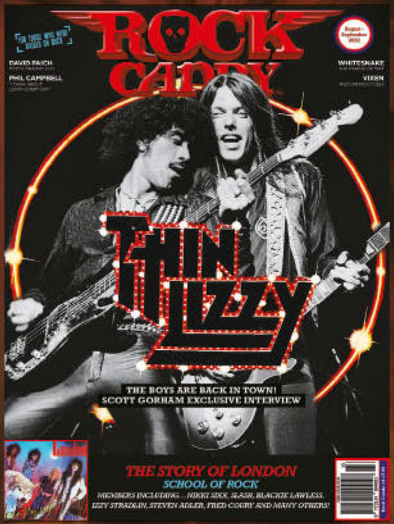

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★ HIGH HOPES

Welshly Arms

They're not Welsh and they don't sell beer. So please don't ask: "What flavour crisps you got?"

"We're usually mistaken for pubs or arms dealers," says Welshly Arms frontman Sam Getz, laughing. "We've had airport incidents where we're carrying guitar cases that look like they could contain guns, and security have said: 'What are you doing here? You can't bring that in!' 'No no no – it's a bass guitar.'"

Incidents like that are bound to happen when you lumber yourselves with a name like theirs (it's cribbed from a *Saturday Night Live* sketch). But perhaps Getz and the rest of the Ohio-based band won't have to worry for too much longer. Their chest-thumping mix of classic rock, blues and gospel has been gaining admirers for a few years now, and upcoming third album, *Wasted Words And Bad Decisions*, could be where they reach critical mass.

The group formed more than 10 years ago through jam sessions among old school friends. Even before that, Getz had been something of a guitar prodigy, playing in his father's classic-rock covers band and supporting Peter Green when he was just 14. But his own group only really started gaining momentum when they brought in vocalists John and Bri Bryant

"They had sung on our first full-length record and we loved them, so they started playing some gigs with us after that and I don't think we ever let them stop."

The duo's gospel vocals provide a soulful element that makes tracks like their 2018 breakthrough single *Legendary* sound like a 21st-century update on the Stones/Zeppelin template.

"I think more rock bands should not ignore the soulful part of rock'n'roll," Getz suggests. "When the Stones brought in the gospel on tracks like *Gimme Shelter*, those were the songs I really dug by them. With ourselves there was a point where we were wondering whether to have a second guitarist, or double down on vocals. I'm glad we went down this route. When you put a lot of voices hammering home a big line of 'aaah', it sort of makes you feel like you're making a lot more noise than you really are."

One of those anthems is recent single *Are You Lonely* which, with its '*Does anybody talk any more?*' refrain, is an emotive plea for true connection.

"I was specifically thinking about how we all sit there with the phone in our hands, our heads down. I also think that we do get lonely. I don't think smart phones are really fulfilling our souls."

Don't get the impression that Welshly Arms are soul-baring, hair shirt-clad puritans. How could they be with that name?

"If ever things get too serious, or we've been on the road too long or a record is being difficult to finish off, one of us will make a comment about the name. It reminds us to keep it fun." **WS**

Wasted Words And Bad Decisions is out on September 23 via Snakefarm Records.

FOR FANS OF...

"I grew up out in the country, and my family were a little slow to adopt certain things like computers," Getz explains. "I remember one time my dad brought home a CD player and *Led Zep I*. It forever changed me. It still feels raw. It feels like three instruments and an insane lead vocal, captured just perfectly."

"I think more rock bands should not ignore the soulful part of rock'n'roll."

Queen

Radio Ga Ga

A song inspired by Roger Taylor's toddler son saying 'shit' in French, it became a hit single and another Queen classic, and had an iconic video to go with it too.

Words: **Dave Everley**

It was Roger Taylor's young son Felix who inadvertently planted the seed for the most iconic Queen song of the 80s. The toddler, son of the drummer and his French girlfriend Dominique Beyrand, wandered into a room in his parents' house while they were listening to the radio. Unimpressed by what he heard, Felix delivered a damning verdict: "Radio ca ca," he said, using the French term for 'shit'.

His father's ears pricked up. "Radio ca ca?" That could make a good song title. His son's view of the state of the music industry in the early 80s mirrored his own. Taylor Sr didn't like the way splashy music videos had supplanted radio as the medium of choice among the day's pop kids. Radio, he thought, needed to pull its trousers up.

"Radio was the first place I heard rock'n'roll," Taylor grumbled to *Modern Drummer* magazine in 1984. "Today it seems that video has become more important than the music itself – too much so, really. Music is supposed to be an experience for the ears more than the eyes."

Queen were at their own crossroads at the time. 1982's disco-heavy *Hot Space* album had alienated a large chunk of their fan base, while a decade of relentless recording and touring pushed tempers and egos alike to breaking point. "We did hate each other for a while," Brian May later said.

The had taken a lengthy break from each other before reconvening in Los Angeles in the summer of 1983 for sessions for their next album, *The Works*. When Mercury informed Taylor that the songs he'd brought in for the record weren't good enough, the drummer sequestered himself in a room in the Record Plant studio with a drum machine and a synthesiser to work on a song to go with what his son had uttered: "Radio ca ca."

He didn't really know how to work these fancy electronic gadgets, but he managed to fashion the bare bones of a song, complete with lyrics reverse-constructed from the song's title. When he played it to Mercury, the singer's commercial antennae were tweaked.

"I think Roger was thinking about it as just another track, but I instantly felt there was something in there – a really good, strong, saleable commodity" he later said.

Fortuitously, Taylor decided to take a break from the sessions to go on holiday. Before he went he told Mercury to "do what you want" with the song. The singer took his bandmate up on his offer. "Roger had the ideas all together," said Mercury, who worked on the song with assistance from session keyboard player Fred Mandel. "But I felt there were some construction elements that were wrong. I virtually took the song over."

The changes weren't just structural. Realising that no radio station would play a song called Radio Ca Ca, the band retitled it *Radio Ga Ga*, although Taylor later insisted the song's original title remained intact in its lyrics: "If you listen closely, that's what we're singing: 'Radio ca ca.'" For much the same reason, the band's new US label, Capitol, insisted they temper the downbeat angle of lines such as *'You've had your time, You've had your power'*. Hence a verse that celebrated radio as an *'old friend'*, warning that *"We might miss you, when we grow tired of all this visual"*.

"I think Roger was thinking about it as just another track, but I instantly felt there was a really good, strong, saleable commodity."

The finished track was a masterpiece of mid-80s pop-rock, simultaneously a love letter to radio and a call for it to pull up its metaphorical trousers. It throbbed with an electronic pulse that was at odds with its nostalgic longing for a time when radio was king. Its terrace-anthem chorus was accompanied by a hooky double handclap, but unusually for a Queen track there was little guitar from Brian May beyond a few licks towards the end.

The song's criticism of the increasingly popularity of MTV didn't stop the label splashing out north of £100,000 on a striking promo video to accompany it. Directed by music video hotshot David Mallet and inspired by Fritz Lang's classic 1927 German expressionist sci-fi film *Metropolis*, it had the band zipping around a futuristic city in a flying silver car (amusingly, Mercury hid a stash of vodka in the glove compartment to stave off boredom). For the video's iconic centrepiece, Mallet had the band, sporting vivid red tops, stand in front of 500 extras from the Queen fan club, leading them in a choreographed mass handclap in time to the song's chorus. The idea was that the crowd represented the unthinking masses, but it prompted *NME*, never great supporters of Queen, to liken the scene to a Nazi rally.

"That was so absurd," an exasperated Taylor said in the Queen web series *The Greatest*. "It was meant to mirror the film… the oppressed workers. The Nazi thing is laughable. People will always find an agenda if they need one."

The video helped take the song to No.2 in the UK. The US was a different matter. The single peaked at No.16, its progress halted when Capitol were found to have been involved in a 'payola' scandal a few years earlier. Independent radio promoters pulled support for all current artists, Queen among them. *Radio Ga Ga* dropped down the *Billboard* chart like a stone.

But *Radio Ga Ga*'s own finest hour was still to come. On July 13, 1985, Queen appeared at the Live Aid concert at Wembley Stadium. After opening with a snippet of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, they launched into *Radio Ga Ga*, and were greeted by the sight of 72,000 people mimicking the video's handclaps back at them. "It became one of the first great proofs of the power of television," May said in *The Greatest*. "When we played it at Live Aid, everybody knew what to do." Roger Taylor's message had caught on, even if wasn't in the way he'd imagined.

SCREEN GRAB The video for *Radio Ga Ga* features clips from the 1927 sci-fi classic *Metropolis*. Queen had been working on a soundtrack to a restored version of the film with acclaimed electronic producer Giorgio Moroder at the time they shot the video, so they were granted permission to use *Metropolis* footage in their video.

The Queen/Moroder collaboration never came to fruition, although the Freddie Mercury solo track *Love Kills* did appear on the soundtrack when the film came out in 1984, along with tracks from Pat Benatar Jon Anderson and Loverboy.

ALAMY

Queen: able to turn 'shit' into gold.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
January 16, 1984

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.2,
US No.16

PERSONNEL
Freddie Mercury
Vocals, synthesiser, sampler
Brian May
Guitar
John Deacon
Bass
Roger Taylor
Drums, synthesiser, sampler
Fred Mandel
Synthesiser programming

WRITTEN BY
Roger Taylor

PRODUCED BY
Dirk Steffens

LABEL
EMI (UK)

Q&A

Steve Diggle

The Buzzcocks leader on following his dream, the toll of partying too hard, and continuing after losing Pete Shelley.

Interview: **Ian Fortnam**

Teenage scooter enthusiast Steve Diggle was introduced to Pete Shelley by Malcolm McLaren at the Sex Pistols' first Manchester show, in 1976, and they formed Buzzcocks, one of the punk era's most enduring combos. Reluctant *Top Of The Pops* mainstays, they enjoyed a string of timeless hits, not least the evergreen *Ever Fallen In Love (With Someone You Shouldn't've)*. Following Shelley's tragic death in 2018, Diggle has led the band into a new era that's soon to be defined by their first post-Pete album, *Sonics In The Soul*.

How did a Mancunian background shape you?
Growing up in a post-war industrial town – old *Coronation Street* terraces, a pub on the corner that smelt of booze and fags, factory workers – you're trying to work out what do I make of this? But then my brother [modernist action painter Philip Diggle] was into art, and I grew up with all that sixties music – The Beatles and Bob Dylan had a massive effect on me, the Rolling Stones, *Ready Steady Go!*, The Kinks, The Who – and I realised there's life outside this grimy, grainy Manchester town.

Before punk struck, who was Steve Diggle?
I was on the dole by choice. I'd one job before deciding I was going to play guitar. I put on my coat and said I'm never going to work again. I had to follow my dream. I started writing songs at seventeen, never thinking I'd be in a group, because pre-punk it seemed impossible. I mean, Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple had their names on planes. How do you get from Manchester to having your name on a plane?

What do you remember of that fateful night at Manchester's Lesser Free Trade Hall when Malcolm McLaren introduced you to Pete Shelley and Howard Devoto?
A moment of fate. I'd been rehearsing with two kids, singing *Paranoid* by Black Sabbath, but these guys had jobs, they didn't mean it. So I phoned a bloke in the paper and said: "I'll meet you outside the Free Trade Hall." And, of course, when I get there Malcolm McLaren's standing there saying: "They're in here, the Sex Pistols." I said I'm not here for that. But he said: "You don't understand, they're in here." And he introduced me to Pete Shelley, who was collecting tickets. He'd spoken to somebody on the phone, and I'd phoned somebody else, so we were at cross purposes, but got on okay. So me, him and Howard Devoto sat at the back of the first Manchester Sex Pistols gig discussing forming the Buzzcocks: three-minute songs with a bit of angst, individuality and art.

Aside from the vocal melodies that brought the hits, you and Pete Shelley's twin-guitar sound defined the Buzzcocks: tight, simple repetition.
We was all into Krautrock. All three of us went to see Can playing Manchester, just days after meeting. I had a Stockhausen box set, and recorded my mother's vacuum cleaning once. Played it through the speakers and thought: "Wow, that noise!" So that was also in the mix. And Pete loved Neu! so there was an angular element to things as well.

You made a lot of appearances on *Top Of The Pops*.
At first, I was with The Clash: let's not do it. But then I remembered seeing The Who on it when I was a kid, and thought it'd be better to be on it than not. We used to get completely drunk in the BBC bar, because I had no interest in it. I'd been playing Middlesbrough the night before to real people, rather than directors who didn't know the music or what it was about, shouting: "Don't look at the cameras."

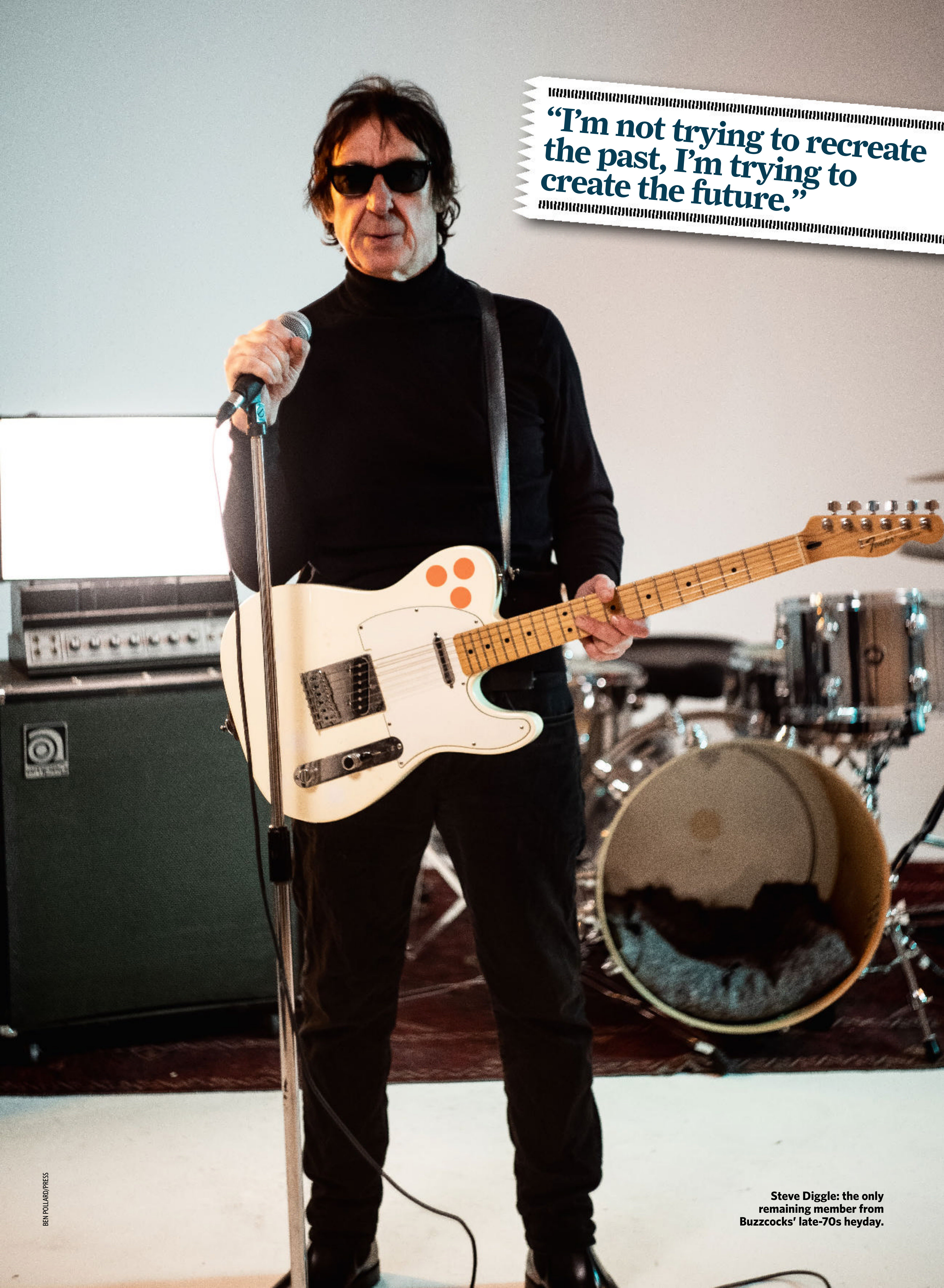
Buzzcocks made three albums, had a string of hits, but disbanded in 1981. What happened?
We partied hard, we were like *Hammer Of The Gods*. As soon as you signed a deal, you could afford cocaine, champagne, the lot. And we went to America a lot. You don't conquer America, it conquers you. It was like Henry Cooper getting in the ring with Cassius Clay: only one of them was ever going to win. But at least we got in there and had a go. We had wild times in America, every night, no sleep for days, sex, drugs, rock'n'roll every inch of the way. And after five years it took its toll a bit, so we took a break.

When you lost frontman Pete Shelley, in December 2018, was there any question in your mind that you should continue with the Buzzcocks name?
There've been a lot of band members over the years, but it was me and Pete from day one. After forty-three years it was like a marriage. We were like mountaineers, roped together: if one goes the other goes. But on the last tour, he came to my room and said: "Steve, I'm thinking of retiring. You carry on." And I said: "You're not leaving this thing with me." Then we had a break for Christmas, and when I got home I got a call from our manager: "Pete's dead." It was devastating. He was my brother, we grew up together. Anyway, we had the Albert Hall booked for a Buzzcocks gig, so made it a memorial for Pete with guests, but what then? The other two guys in the band had been with us fifteen years, and it was a knee-jerk to carry on. Not just do the old hits, but usher in a new era. We've had the Devoto dynasty, the Shelley dynasty, now it's the Diggle dynasty. Then came covid; I had a lot of time on my hands so started writing an album.

Was it always wine and roses with Pete?
Sometimes we'd have disagreements. Who wouldn't? I'd call it intellectual fencing. We both liked a drink, and a lot of the people we've worked with would come for one or two, but we'd still be the ones there at the end. So over the years we covered a lot of ground: art, philosophy, the human condition. Pete could be quite exacting, so sometimes I'd say: "You're too logical. Dostoevsky says logic's like a pile of bricks – meaningless."

***Sonics In The Soul* is a bold, confident statement: a tougher more contemporary spin on the familiar Buzzcocks template.**
Absolutely. I'm not trying to recreate the past, I'm trying to create the future.

Sonics In The Soul is released on September 23 via Cherry Red.



"I'm not trying to recreate the past, I'm trying to create the future."

BEN POLLARD/PRESS

Steve Diggle: the only remaining member from Buzzcocks' late-70s heyday.

THE CLASSIC ROCK INTERVIEW

PETER FRAMPTON

Over a six-decade career, Peter Frampton has lived the rock life to its fullest, playing many parts – prodigy, teen idol, guitar hero, global superstar, forgotten man, comeback kid, survivor. Through it all, he's returned to one defining thought: "I'm a musician, first and foremost."

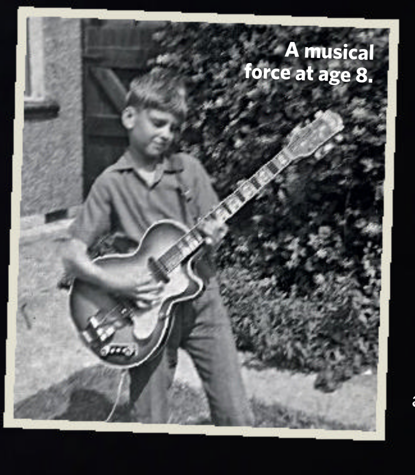
Interview: **Bill DeMain** Portraits: **Austin Lord**

"Sorry, I know this is not quite what we had planned," Peter Frampton says, aplogetically. For *Classic Rock*'s cover-story interview, we were set to meet the 72-year old at his recording studio in Berryhill, a hip neighborhood that has become Nashville's new Music Row. But the night before, one of his studio assistants tested positive for covid. Foremost on Frampton's mind was the safety of his two-year-old granddaughter Elle, who, with his daughter and son-in-law, was staying with him for the month. To err on the side of caution – and to be able to see each other's maskless faces – we moved our chat to Zoom.

So here's Frampton, at home on a humid July morning, dressed in a black T-shirt with a silver chain and polished metal-and-wood pendant, his close-cropped hair and moustache-and-beard age-appropriately and unapologetically white. During our three-hour conversation, he's funny and personable, quick to laugh at both himself and the head-spinning twists and turns his life and career have taken in his storied 56-year ride.

A little history: born on April 22, 1950 in Beckenham, Kent, Peter Kenneth Frampton was one of two children raised by educator parents. His dad Owen was an art teacher, who counted among his students the young David Jones, later Bowie. Peter was something of a prodigy, teaching himself guitar at eight and playing his first professional gigs at 13. By the time he was 16 he was performing on *Top Of The Pops* fronting pop group The Herd. He never looked back.

There were many ups and downs ahead. In our time together, we touched on them all: Humble Pie and Steve Marriott; sessions with George Harrison; nearly becoming a Rolling Stone; a Mob-connected manager; the *Sgt. Pepper* film debacle; touring as David Bowie's guitarist; winning a Grammy; helping to make the film *Almost Famous*; the ill-fated Humble Pie reunion; being animated in *The Simpsons*; and of course *Frampton Comes Alive!*, the iconic emblem of 70s rock, and for many years the biggest-selling record of all time.



A musical force at age 8.

INSET: COURTESY OF PETER FRAMPTON

Before we get into your amazing career, I want to talk about your dad. He was an art teacher at Bromley Technical School, and one of his students was David Jones, who was one of your schoolmates. Did the young future David Bowie inspire you to pursue music?

Seeing David play with his band The Kon-Rads made a huge impression on me. There he was with his suit and his hair sticking up, playing

First taste of stardom, with The Herd in 1967: (l-r) Andy Bown, Andrew Steele, Peter Frampton and Gary Taylor.

Frampton, girlfriend Penny McCall and manager Dee Anthony at a function in Beverly Hills, California in 1978.

"Being chased and having your clothes ripped off by girls was all very exciting but it got old very quickly."

sax and singing Little Richard songs. I thought: "I want to be him!"

But I had already started playing a few years before. I picked up the banjolele first, then got a guitar for Christmas when I was eight. I was one of those kids who learned everything really quickly. My parents' eyes were popping out of their heads: "Oh my god, where did you learn that?!" "I heard it on the radio…" "But how?" "I don't know, I just found the chords and sang along." So I knew – and unfortunately *they* knew [laughs] – that the future was probably going to lead to me being a musician.

Didn't you and Bowie play guitars together at school?

Yes. George Underwood and David were students of my dad's. George is still one of my closest friends. So it was the three of us and we were all into music heavily. George was the first one on TV, as Calvin James, produced by Mickie Most. Then he decided that wasn't for him and went into fine arts. And of course he designed the covers for [Bowie's albums] *Hunky Dory* and *Ziggy Stardust*. My dad said: "Why don't you all bring your guitars to school? We can stash them in my office before assembly in the morning, then at lunch time you can get them out and play." So my dad was very instrumental for all three of us. We'd play Buddy Holly, Eddie Cochran, whatever was American.

Was there any hint of Bowie's theatrical side back then?

I remember my dad coming home from school one day – this was before I met Dave – and saying to my mum: "You know, Peggy, there's something very strange about that Jones boy." And I'm all ears. "Because on Friday, I'd swear he had eyebrows" [laughs]. So I think David was already being different.

What was the first ever record you bought?

The Everly Brothers' single *('Til) I Kissed You*. My dad didn't like it, so I had to smuggle it into the house and only play it when he wasn't there. Then he heard it one day, and came into my room with his arms folded, frowning [laughs]. Years later, when I moved to Nashville, I got to meet Chet Atkins, who played guitar on and produced that record. I was a fan of all guitar players – Hank Marvin, Duane Eddy, Kenny Burrell.

When you were sixteen you joined The Herd and had your first brush with pop stardom, but more as a vocalist than as a guitarist.

I had been in the band not even a year when we started doing the residency at the Marquee club on Saturday nights in the summer. It was the place to be seen. Everybody hung out there – The Who, The Faces. That's where we got our record deal. I was asked to join as the guitar player. I did some 'ooh's and 'ahh's in the background, and I sang a Ray Charles number called *Hide Nor Hair*. I thought, I've got an okay voice, nothing to write home about. It's my guitar playing where I manage to translate my emotions into music.

Studio time with The Herd.

So you were a reluctant frontman?

It was out of my control. Our managers Howard and Blaikley had seen me sing the Ray Charles song, and the way I looked was perfect for the cover of *Rave!* and all these teenybopper magazines. We went round to their apartment in Swiss Cottage and they played us this song, *I Can Fly*. Honestly, it didn't sound very good. But they said: "And Peter's going to sing it." And it was one of those cartoon double-take moments [makes silly noise and laughs]. We were all in shock. Somehow, the band agreed to it and I went along. It wasn't a big hit, but it got us noticed. Then they wrote *From The Underworld*, which I sang, and we're on *Top Of The Pops*, meeting Cliff Richard and the Bee Gees. That's when all 'The Face' stuff started; they didn't put The Herd on the covers of the magazines, they put *me* on. And instantly it started discontent in the band. I felt terrible. The die was cast.

GETTY x2; INSET: ALAMY

Humble Pie circa 1969: (l-r) Steve Marriott, drummer Jerry Shirley hidden), Greg Ridley, Peter Frampton.

ALAMY

How quickly did you tire of being 'The Face'?
Being chased and having your clothes ripped off by girls was all very exciting, but it got old very quickly. And I could see what that was doing to the band. And as I was to experience later in life, a teenybopper in the band can rid you of your credibility. My guitar was now slung behind my back most of the time. And being screamed at by girls during a show also got old really quickly. You realise that they weren't listening. Not that I'd ever compare myself with The Beatles, but they said it best: [adopts Liverpool accent] "Why would we want to play if they can't hear us?"

"What Humble Pie enabled us to do most of all was start over, on a musical level rather than on an image level," Frampton says of his next band experience. Right from the first time he saw vocalist/guitarist Steve Marriott playing with the Small Faces on TV pop show *Ready Steady Go!*, Peter knew that he wanted to make music with him. And after the pair met in late 1968 they wasted no time in starting a group.

The first version of Humble Pie – guitarists/vocalists Frampton and Marriott, drummer Jerry Shirley and bassist Greg Ridley – lasted only two and a half years, but they made an indelible mark with four studio albums, plus one of the all-time great live records, *Performance: Rockin' At The Fillmore*. "We made great records," says Frampton. "But we were something else live."

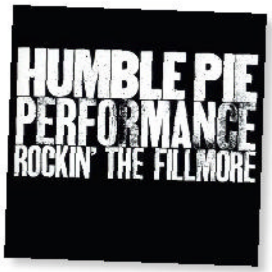
Steve Marriott had also had the 'cute' problem in the Small Faces. Was that part of the motivation for both you two to form a proper rock band?
Definitely. The first thing was, we decided that we wouldn't shave or bathe! We all grew beards and didn't wear groovy clothes. We wanted to be accepted for our musicality. We released our first single, *Natural Born Bugie*, and guess what? We're back on *Top Of The Pops* again and we're being screamed at.

After that we did release another single, *Big Black Dog*. But Steve was rude to Tony Blackburn, the DJ on *Top Of The Pops*. He kept calling him by the wrong name and would answer his questions with: "Dunno. Ask our manager, mate." The result of which was we were never allowed back on the show. I guess we just hated that we were in the same predicament as the two bands we'd been in before. So at our next band meeting we said: "We need to get out of here. Let's go to America." They didn't know us there. That's when we met Dee Anthony. He started managing us and things really started happening.

> **"The first thing was, we decided that we wouldn't shave or bathe! We wanted to be accepted for our musicality."**
>
> **On forming Humble Pie**

In your book, *Do You Feel Like I Do?: A Memoir*, you say Marriott was the best teacher you ever had for how to deal with an audience. What specific things did you learn from him?
He used humour with the audience. He was a very funny guy. And he wasn't afraid to speak out when he felt it wasn't safe out there in the crowd; he had stopped fights by stopping the band and addressing the people. Also, how to deal with people heckling and all that. Again, with humour. Make fun of them if they're making fun of you, and the audience loves that. Self-deprecation is something else. That's very much me, and it was very much Steve. I guess we all get big-headed if we're entertainers, at some point or other. But I think it was more the insecurity at the root of it. Steve was very insecure. Obviously, one would say: "What the hell for?" He's got this incredible voice and incredible guitar playing. I'm insecure too. Most artists are. Because, basically, you're putting your art out there for the local art reviewer to come and pull to pieces.

In live videos of Humble Pie, Marriott seems to be almost possessed by the spirit of an old blues singer. Was that also your sense of him when he was on stage?
If there was ever someone who was born with an overabundance of soul, it was Steve. Where it came from I have no idea. But he threw himself into it a hundred per cent. It all came out of this tiny frame – Steve was five-foot-nothing. As I say, he was very insecure, but when he opened his mouth and sang and played he was something spectacular. I've



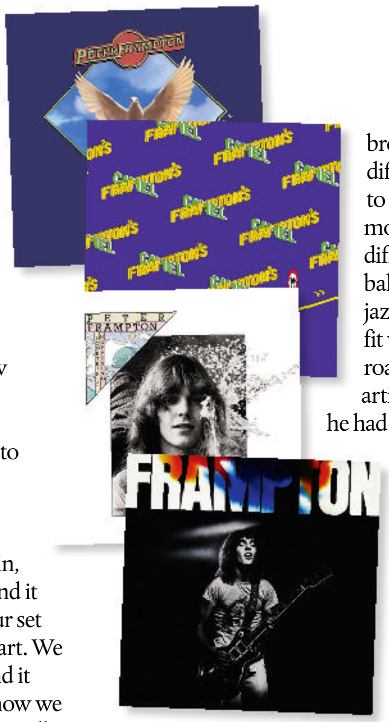
no idea how he accessed that. He gave his all every night. It was phenomenal to watch, and it made you, as a player, go to the ends of the earth too. Because if he's giving his all, I have to match that. He affected us all greatly. That's why we were such a fiery band on stage.

With the music he listened to, was he obsessive about blues artists like Muddy Waters and Lightning Hopkins?
Definitely. Especially Muddy Waters. But the Staples Singers were his absolute favourite. In fact when I listen to Mavis Staples's version of *Oh La De Da*, I realised that's where Steve got a lot of his vocal stuff from. He sings like Mavis. Steve listened to everything. He was a big country fan. All kinds of music, though not so much with the jazz [laughs]. When he didn't like something, you knew it, he didn't hold back. But he loved the more rootsy stuff. When we got first got together and he wrote *Natural Born Bugie*, he said: "I've got a suggestion for the guitar solo on this," and he played me the Bill Black Combo. Steve was very much into Bill Black. I eventually lifted some licks from one of Bill Black's records and put them into *Natural Born Bugie*.

With Humble Pie live, even when you're off in your own worlds on stage, there was an almost telepathic connection between you, Jerry, Steve and Greg.
We were great listeners to each other. Yes, we were there to play our part, but our part was part of the band. Therefore I'm listening intently to the other three, and without thinking about it my brain is working out: "What do I need to do here? Do I need to do more or less at this particular moment?" Then sometimes Steve would conduct us, quieten us down – "Hold it, boys." And we'd all come down, then he'd do one of his wails and you got chills. I am so lucky to have been part of that band, I can't tell you. It did more for my musicality, my playing, my writing, my sense of how a band should be. Humble Pie just brought it all together for me.

How did the Pie song *I Don't Need No Doctor* come about?
We were opening for Grand Funk at Madison Square Garden. It was our first time playing there. We actually got a sound check, which is unusual for an opening band. My rig was the first one to see the red light, so I picked up my guitar as Jerry was just about to sit down at his drums. I turned up and played the loudest E chord I could play, in an empty 22,000-seat Madison Square Garden – the original size. That chord just filled the place. I went: "Oh, wow!" We'd never been in a room that big. Then I played an E-minor, G and A, and for some reason I went [sings lick to song]. Jerry yelled: "One-two-three-four!" and he was in. Then Greg fell in. Steve was at the mixing console a mile away, and I saw him sprinting full-speed towards the stage. He didn't even pick up a guitar. He gets to the mic and yells: "Hold it on the E! *'I don't need no doctor!'*" And that was it. Steve picked up a guitar, then we did it again, we arranged it, rehearsed it, and it became the last number of our set that night. It tore the place apart. We saw the power of the song, and it became our closer of every show we ever did. That was Humble Pie – all we needed was a riff and we were off. And that was one hell of a riff.

The early seventies was the era of notorious rock managers: Don Arden, Peter Grant, and Dee Anthony who managed Humble Pie and your solo career. Anthony had ties with the Mob. Do you think the upsides of working with him outweighed the downsides?
Boy, that's a loaded question. Put it this way: we wouldn't be sitting here talking today if it wasn't for Dee Anthony. I give him kudos for his clout, his pushiness. I don't know how involved in my career the Mob were, but I know that he had to pay them. I found that out. The bigger Humble Pie got, or the bigger I got as a solo artist, the more he had to pay them. You don't ever get out. Dee had a side of him that was ruthless and greedy. He was… a crook [laughs]. He would rob me to pay Humble Pie, and rob Humble Pie to pay me. All I ever wanted was to be known as a halfway decent guitar player, and now here I am the biggest act in the world for a couple of years. And all the money went through him, while very little filtered on to me, shall we say.



Frampton left Humble Pie in 1971, just as they were reaching a commercial peak with the *Fillmore* live album. Marriott's increasing drug use was causing friction between the two friends ("Steve and I were brothers, but he could be very difficult"), but Frampton's decision to strike out on his own was motivated more by musical differences. The softer acoustic ballads and more sophisticated, jazzier songs he was writing didn't fit with the Pie's whisky blues-rock roar. But before he signed as a solo artist with A&M Records in 1972, he had a fertile period of being a sought-after session musician, and played with George Harrison, John Entwistle, Donovan, Jerry Lee Lewis, Jobriath and Harry Nilsson, among others.

In 1970 you became a friend and musical cohort of George Harrison. How did that come about?
Terry Doran, who is the *'man in the motor trade'* in [The Beatles' song] *She's Leaving Home*, was John Lennon's personal assistant, then he became George's. Terry was a known figure in town in the clubs. I didn't know quite what he did. We'd meet up in this pub called The Ship, just up the road from the Marquee. One time, I'm there, and he said: "Do you want to come and meet Geoffrey?" I said: "Geoffrey who?" "You know, George." That was his code name. All the Beatles, like the presidents, had code names [laughs]. So we went to Trident Studios, just down the block. I was very nervous. It was my first Beatle meeting ever. We walk in, and there's George behind the console. He says: [pitch-perfect George] "Hullo, Pete." I thought: "Did Pete Townshend walk in behind me?" I had no idea that a Beatle would know who I was.

And you were immediately pressed into playing guitar.
Yes! It was: "Nice to meet you, man… Do you want to play?" I said: "You mean now?" They'd just finished writing this song for Doris Troy, called *Ain't That Cute?*. So he gave me 'Lucy,' that red Les Paul that he used on a lot of later records, and the one Eric [Clapton] played on *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*. I plugged in, and I can't take my eyes off George, because I want to get this right. Then I glanced to my right and there's Stephen Stills sitting there. What?! George showed me the chords, and I'm playing very quiet rhythm. He stops the tape and says: "No, I want you to play lead." Then I started to sweat a little [laughs]. But I ended up playing the lead fills and intro on this song that was a single.

That led to you playing on George's album *All Things Must Pass*.
George called a few weeks later and said: "Pete, ▷

GETTY

"All I ever wanted was to be known as a halfway decent guitar player, and here I am the biggest act in the world for a couple of years."

Having what was for a while the biggest-selling album ever, with *Frampton Comes Alive!*, was scary, says Frampton

I'm doing my own album with Phil Spector. Would you come and play some acoustic? Phil wants, like, nineteen of everything." I was there for a week. We did *If Not For You, Behind The Locked Door, My Sweet Lord* and a few others. Two weeks later, George calls me and says: "Phil wants more acoustics." So that time, it was just me and George sitting on two stools in front of the glass at Abbey Road, and there's Phil Spector. It was very surreal. It's one of those moments that I will never, ever forget. Phil loved the way it sounded, so we started adding it to a bunch of tracks. In the end I don't know how many songs I played on in total. But if you hear an acoustic guitar I'm probably on it.

For all of his eccentricities, do you think Spector really had something special in the studio?
Yes. Firstly, you have to remember that Phil is not used to the artist coming into the control room. Fuck that. You're going to tell George Harrison, Ringo, Gary Wright and Billy Preston they can't come in to listen? No, that's not the way we work over here. So Phil looked petrified when we'd all come in the control room [laughs]. He was complaining about his stomach ulcers all the time. But say there are five acoustics and seven other players. In the headphones it just sounded like what it was. But when we walked into the control room to hear the playback, it was like there were twenty thousand people on the track! It was instant, a phenomenal turnaround. Every tape machine was rolling, every echo chamber was turned on. It was the [Spector's legendary] Wall Of Sound. And I have to say, I love the new mixes they did on *All Things Must Pass* last year. There's more vocal. But there's something about Phil's original mixes that was magical.

Another successful album you played on was Harry Nilson's *Nilsson Schmilsson*. What was your take on him?
He was another one of these phenomenal artists who kind of took me under his wing. George said to Harry: "You should use Peter on your album." So I get a call from Harry. He had a heart of gold. He was petrified of performing, but loved the studio. He had a lot of insecurities too, and of course that led to his later period where he was self-destructive. But everyone loved Harry. He was funny, very bright, and quick to say how much he liked something. It was a pleasure to work with people who appreciated what you did.

"As for why *Frampton Comes Alive!* turned into what it did, I still don't know."

And in 1973 you played on Jerry Lee Lewis's album *The Session*. Given his reputation, was that intimidating?
Not for the reason you'd think. There was Albert Lee, Rory Gallagher and me. It was produced by Steve Rowland, who produced The Herd. That's why I got the call. So we're all sitting outside in the anteroom, and you'd hear: "Okay, guitarist number three, come in!" Each one of us did a track with him, then all three of us played together on a track. Basically, it was Albert's band Head, Hands & Feet as the backing band. Jerry Lee was very cordial, very appreciative of us being there. It was nerve-racking for me in a different way, because I remember watching Albert Lee at a club from the front row and thinking: "Oh my god, I'll never be that good." I felt the same about Rory. It was very intimidating to be with those two, but I held my own. I think I enjoyed it more afterwards [laughs].

The same year, you also played on Jobriath's self-titled album, the fabled glam-rock disaster. What are your memories of being in the studio with him?
It was around the time I was doing *Frampton's Camel* at Electric Lady with Eddie Kramer. Eddie was the producer on the Jobriath album. I just remember Jobriath being really nice, with these odd, slightly complex songs. I was enjoying being a session guy, where people were throwing stuff at me that I had to really think about, bringing my style to whatever was in front of me. That was the thing. I was the kind of session guy that you didn't hire to say: "Okay, I want you to play like Eric Clapton." The engineers and producers who hired me knew that I would bring Peter Frampton's style to the record. That's what they wanted. I'm not very good at mimicking other people. Except for The Shadows. I can still play all of those songs note for note.

***Frampton's Camel* was one of four solo albums you released in rapid succession in the early seventies, leading up to *Frampton Comes Alive!*. It seems like your label, A&M, really gave you room to grow and develop your sound.**
It was my discovery period. I was learning how to sing properly. I was becoming more relaxed and creative, getting better as a songwriter. When Herb Alpert and Jerry Moss started A&M, they said: "If we're going to form a label, let's make it like United Artists." The reason that all the actors formed United Artists was to get away from all the bullshit of other people's egos. Herb said: "Let's sign artists that we like, and let them do their thing." That was their criteria. Simple as that. It was the fifth album for me that finally clicked. *Frampton* [his fourth solo record, in '75] sold pretty well, but it wasn't until *Comes Alive!* that things broke open.

That's an understatement. For about eighteen months, beginning in early 1976, Peter Frampton was the biggest rock star on the planet. How did it happen? First, through years of non-stop touring, opening shows for everyone from Black Sabbath to The Kinks to ZZ Top, he had built a loyal following. Second, the set list-of romantic hits such as *Show Me The Way* and *Baby, I Love Your Way* and guitar-shredding jams like *I Wanna Go To The Sun* and *Do You Feel Like We Do?* that made up *Frampton Comes Alive!* perfectly framed his strengths: the controlled fire of his lead playing, his unpretentious, soulful voice, his accessible songwriting, the talk-box. It was all there in one appealing package. And then there was his band – keyboard player Bob Mayo, drummer John Siomos, bassist Stanley Sheldon – who were one of the tightest, most versatile of the era. Frampton is quick to point out that ▷

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his breakthrough wouldn't have happened without the emotional chemistry he had with them. "It was the best band I'd ever had. That line-up came together in 1975, so it was a new band, but it gelled so quickly that it took us to a WNL – whole 'nother level," he says with a smile.

When did you realise that *Frampton Comes Alive!* was going to change your life?

1976 was going to be the first headline tour for me. I'd been in the middle position for years, being a great support act. I sold tickets, but I was still playing with other bands. As the album was coming out, I went away to the Bahamas for ten days. Before I left, my agent Frank Barsalona said: "Guess what? You've sold out a show at Cobo Arena in Detroit." I couldn't believe it. Ten days later we've sold out three nights at Cobo. That's when I thought: "Wow, what's going on here?" *Comes Alive!* was just starting to get played at radio at that point, and it just kind of took off immediately. As for why it turned into what it did, I still don't know.

What did you do with your first million-dollar royalty cheque?

Ever since I was twelve I've been a gadget freak, an audio freak. Across the street from A&M in LA there was a studio supply place, and the bank was next door to A&M. So I deposited the cheque, then walked across the street and for the very first time in my life I was able to say: "I'll have four of those, please, I'll have two of those…" I bought all these mics and outboard gear and a multi-track tape player – the innards of my very first studio. It probably wasn't fifty thousand dollars in total. But that was the first thing I did with the money.

"[Former manager] Dee Anthony said: 'You're now the biggest-selling album of all-time.' That's when I got scared."

It's interesting in your memoir, at the moment *Comes Alive*! hits Number One on every chart, your reaction is a mix of shock, excitement and worry. You mention the little guy on your shoulder saying, "How are you going to follow this?"

I've used the word 'surreal' before, but that level of success took some getting used to. There was one week where we sold a million copies. The little guy on my shoulder appeared when I got the call that we were Number One. I was really excited at first, but the album stayed there for so long that I got the second call from Dee Anthony and he said: "Are you sitting down? You've just broken Carole King's *Tapestry* record – you're now the biggest-selling album of all time." That's when I got scared. Because I now realise I have to follow up a live record that is not just a hit, but the biggest record of all time. I had help in the substance abuse area around that time, because everyone was abusing themselves then. I didn't have to, but I did, and that was partly the reason – because I was scared stiff.

And the follow-up, *I'm In You*, happened too fast.

I absolutely did not want to record *I'm In You*. I knew that you're only as good as your last record. I wish I had taken my time. But I had to sift through everyone's agenda. I'm twenty-six years old. My brain hasn't finished growing yet. And I started making bad decisions, by going along with what everybody thought. "You've got the biggest album ever, so you want to follow this up as quickly as you can because otherwise people will forget you!" "People aren't going to forget me…" "You don't know that." I always quote the Eagles story here. You'd think with their long career they'd have twenty-seven studio records and four live albums and several 'greatest hits'. They've only had eight albums. They don't go near the studio until they've ▷

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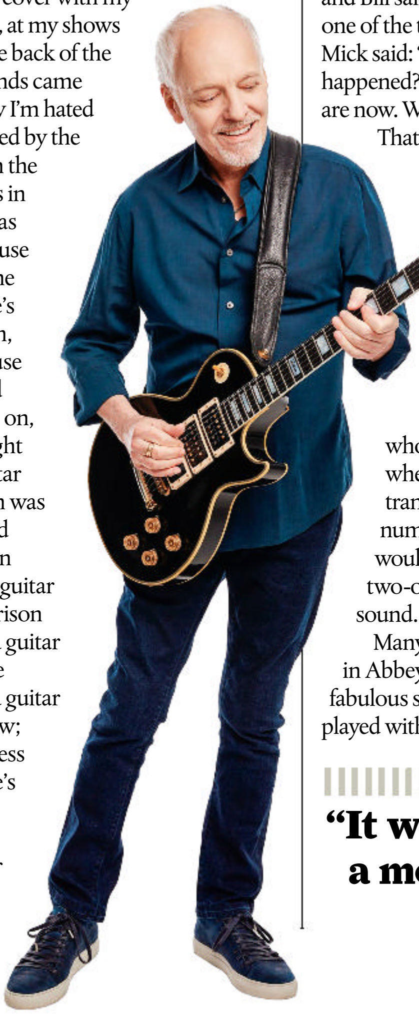
Frampton with the Bee Gees on the set of the film *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, October 1977.

Still flying high on success: shooting an episode of American TV series *Black Sheep Squadron* in California in 1978.

got incredible songs. I could've waited three or four years. Other artists have. But the other side of the coin was Jerry Moss saying: "The longer you wait, the harder it's going to be." That's true too. But it wasn't to be.

At the same time, there was the infamous photo of you shirtless by Francesco Scavullo that appeared on the cover of *Rolling Stone*. It was really damaging, wasn't it?

Yes it was. I had a fifty-fifty male/female audience up until *I'm In You* was released. Throughout the year, as *Rolling Stone*, then more magazines, came out with me on the cover with my shirt off [grimaces], at my shows the guys went to the back of the hall and the girlfriends came to the front. So now I'm hated by the guys and loved by the women. I'm back in the same position I was in The Herd. And it was so frustrating, because I couldn't control the way I looked. There's an assumption: "Oh, you got there because of your looks." And I'm thinking: "Hold on, I really didn't. I fought my way up as a guitar player." Bill Wyman was my first believer and discovered me when I was fourteen, as a guitar player. George Harrison appreciated me as a guitar player. David Bowie appreciated me as a guitar player. They all knew; people in the business knew. But everyone's looking at these magazine covers and thinking: "Poor Pete." It's not what I wanted at all.



Speaking of Bill Wyman, you were in the running to become a Rolling Stone after Mick Taylor left. Do you ever fantasise about how that would have played out?

Every day [laughs]. No, not really. It was Charlie [Watts] and Bill who put my name forward, because I was closer to them than to the others. But then when we were doing *I'm In You*, Mick Jagger was in Studio A at Electric Lady and I was in Studio B. I think he was mixing a Stones live album. One day, I bump into him and say: "Okay, I've got to ask. I heard it on the radio, and Bill said that he submitted my name. Was I one of the top five people in the running?" And Mick said: "Yes, you were." I said: "So what happened?" And he said: "Well look where you are now. We knew you were just about to break."

That was a great excuse.

The talk-box is such a big part of your signature sound. Why did it appeal to you?

Let me give you the background first. When I was a kid, we had a station called Radio Luxembourg, and there was a DJ called Kid Jensen, who went from seven to midnight. So when I'd go to bed, I'd take my little transistor radio and tune in. Their call numbers were 208, and the station ID would go: [sings in robot voice] "Fabulous two-oh-eight." It was this cool, 'computerised' sound. And I'd think: "How do they do that?"

Many years go by. I'm with George Harrison in Abbey Road, and I meet Pete Drake, this fabulous steel guitar player from Nashville. He's played with Dylan on *Nashville Skyline*, and George has brought him over. And Pete showed me this talk-box. When the pedal steel started singing to me, I thought: "Eureka! Fabulous two-oh-eight." There it is. A completed circle. I said: "Where do I get one?" Pete said: "Well I made this one myself." After that, Pete lent his talk-box to Joe Walsh, who used it on *Rocky Mountain Way*. Then Joe asked his audio engineer Bob Heil: "Hey Bob, I've got this talk-box from Pete Drake but it's not loud enough. Can you make me one that's louder?" I knew Bob, and he gave one to my girlfriend to give me for Christmas. I locked myself away for a couple of weeks and learned how to talk with it. I thought: "Wouldn't it be great if I could say hello to the audience through this talk-box?"

How was it the first time you used it on stage?

I probably did it first in 1974 on that tour, on *Do You Feel*. It was insane. It felt like the whole audience moved a foot forward towards the stage. It was a jolt, where you felt them saying: "What is that sound?!" The more I would talk, and ask them questions, it just kept getting crazier. The ultimate moment was me just saying: "*Do you feel?*" "Oh my god, yes, yes, waaaaaaahh, we do!" It exceeded my wildest dreams. Then we introduced it into *Show Me The Way*, and the rest, as they say, is history.

This moment coincides pop-culture wise with *Star Wars*, and our fascination with cyborgs and robots. Maybe it was as simple as people thinking: "It's Peter Frampton as a robot."

We had this guy who built this replica of R2-D2. For our encore, this life-sized robot with my guitar

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"It was such a stupid story line. If we were making a movie for five-to-seven-year-olds, we made it."

On the disastrous *Sgt Pepper* film

Cease and desist: R2-D2 brings Peter his guitar at Madison Square Garden, August 1977.

slung over its shoulder would come out and give me the guitar. The audience went nuts. Then we got a cease-and-desist letter from [*Star Wars* creator] George Lucas [laughs].

Something in your book that made me chuckle was your confession that ironing clothes was part of your pre-show ritual.
Yes. I think it was that Zen thing of a repetitive activity relaxing your mind. Also, I had read that Eric Clapton would iron before a show, so I thought I'd try it. I'm fairly fastidious about having no wrinkles in shirts, so it would always be the shirt I was ironing.

I guess you couldn't touch an iron to satin pants…
[Laughs] Now, now, now, that was a long time ago, we shan't talk of satin pants.

The *Sgt. Pepper* movie, in 1978, was an infamous disaster. What do you recall most about it?
On my first day on set, I remember feeling: "I'm making the biggest mistake of my life doing this." I'd said yes against my better judgement. But George Martin was producing the music, and Robert Stigwood, who put the movie together, was on a winning streak with *Grease* and *Saturday Night Fever*. Also, he promised me that Paul McCartney was going to be in it. I thought: "If a Beatle's doing it, then I will too." Then I saw Wings play at Wembley, and I remember Linda said: "Paul, Peter's going to be in that movie." And I said: "You are too, right?" "No, no, I'm not in it." And I thought: "Uh-oh." Three or four months in to the shoot, I think all of us were thinking individually that this thing is a disaster. But no one spoke up. At the start, no one thought we could lose. We've got the Bee Gees, Peter Frampton and Alice Cooper. How can it fail? Well, it would be good if there was a script. It was such a stupid storyline. If we were making a movie for five-to-seven-year-olds, we made it.

There's a clip on YouTube from around the same time of you acting on the show *Black Sheep Squadron* with Robert Conrad. Did you have aspirations to continue acting?
Yes and no. My daughter still wants me to be on an episode of *Law & Order SVU*. I could play the old guy on the street with the cup, saying: "Just put the money in here," while dribbling, but who, it turns out, is the witness they really need [laughs].

In 1978 I got a three-picture deal with Orion. I remember sitting around the conference table with all the execs, and they were saying: "We have some ideas of what we'd like you to do…" This was before *Sgt. Pepper* came out. When it came out, I said to Dee, my manager: "When do we get our first script from Orion?" "Um, I've got some bad news. We don't have a deal any more."

Anyway, around that time, I saw Robert Conrad at a famous restaurant in LA. I'm a huge fan, and I said: "If you ever need a walk-on on one of your shows…" Ten days later I get the script. *A Little Piece Of England*, it was called. And my character was on every page. I was like the guest star. I wasn't very good on the first day of shooting, because I was nervous. But I improved. I learned my lines and everybody's lines. I wanted to be on it. Barry Gibb asked me why I did the show, and I said: "Because we just spent six months making this shitty movie [*Sgt. Pepper*], and I haven't said a damned word." My only line in *Sgt. Pepper* was reading a telegram – and they put George Burns's voice in my mouth. I wanted to find out what it was like acting. I was going to have fun and be on a programme with my favourite actor. I had more fun in that week than I did in six months on *Sgt. Pepper*.

"We introduced it [the talk-box] into *Show Me The Way*, and the rest, as they say, is history."

To add injury to insult, the weekend that *Sgt. Pepper* opened, Frampton was in a bad car accident while on holiday in the Bahamas. During the month he spent recovering in hospital, he took stock of his career. In his memoir he says: "I had time to examine my relationship with Dee Anthony, and start asking: "Where are my publishing royalties? Where are my record royalties?"' He hired a lawyer and started extracting himself from his contracts.

Like a lot of 70s rockers, Frampton soon found himself adrift in the 80s glossy landscape of synth-pop, drum machines and slo-mo MTV videos. "It was my lowest period," he says. And then after his *Premonition* album in 1986 he received a life-saving call from an old friend.

After struggling to recapture your groove in the eighties, your old schoolmate David Bowie called you out of the blue. What did that mean to you and your career? ▷

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David Bowie rehearsing with his band in New York, 1987: (l-r): Richard Cottle, Carlos Alomar, Alan Childs, Bowie, Carmine Rojas, Peter Frampton.

"He [Bowie] knew what I was going through and that I'd lost my cred. He single-handedly gave it back to me."

It meant everything to me. David was a man who reinvented himself every five seconds. And rightly so. He had an incredible sense of self and of public and of image. He was the whole ball of wax. And we had history – from playing guitars together on the art block stairs at Bromley Tech, to Humble Pie having David as our special guest on the 1969 tour of England. His *Space Oddity* was number one, and we were number four with *Natural Born Bugie*. So it was a pretty good tour. We're still buddies throughout all this, and of course David was very close with my parents. He invited all of us to see him in *The Elephant Man* on Broadway.

So I get a call in 1986. I'd just got off tour with Stevie Nicks. David said: "Look, I've just heard your last record, *Premonition*, and I love your playing on it. Could you come and do some of that for me?" And I said: "Um, okay." So I went to Switzerland and played on *Never Let Me Down*. While I'm there, he asks: "Would you ever think about going on tour with me?" It was like a sigh of relief. I'm going to play with David finally after all these years. I was so excited, not really realising what it would do for my lack of credibility. My credibility was in the toilet in the eighties. As we would play shows, people were remarking on how great it was that all of a sudden I'm a guitar player again. There was this solo spot at the end of *Loving The Alien* where I could go off and solo for four minutes. The gift that David gave me was just wonderful. He knew what I was going through and that I'd lost my cred. He single-handedly gave it back to me. And I could never thank him enough. He could've had any guitarist, but he chose me.

Did he have any pre-show rituals?
Dave would have a hairdresser and make-up person, because that's what he did. He wanted to look a certain way. I think those moments were his time for preparing for the show. Sitting in that chair, while people are doing things to him, he's all tunnel-vision, just inside himself, concentrating on everything he needs to do in the set. Meanwhile, I would be limbering up on guitar, and he'd shout across the room: "Oh, that sounds good, Pete!"

Playing live with him you were basically covering several iconic guitarists: Mick Ronson, Robert Fripp, Stevie Ray Vaughan… Was that daunting?
I knew most of Dave's songs, of course. Everyone does. Basically, I would go back and listen to what those guitarists did on the records, then I would hint at it so that it wasn't too different. Signal what people remember, then go off into my own area, as if I had played on the original track, whether it was *"Heroes"* or *Scary Monsters*. Like I said when we were talking about session work, it's my style that comes through. I'm not a guy who can say: "Now I'm going to be Adrian Belew", "Now I'm going to be Robert Fripp."

There's a video on YouTube of you and Bowie walking around Madrid looking for somewhere to get a beer. The camaraderie is obvious. Did you flash back to school days and have certain favourite inside jokes?
Hmm, inside jokes, probably, but I can't remember exactly. But I can tell you that David would always quote my dad. Because my father Owen was a bit like a surrogate father to him. David was a great mimic and a great

DENIS O'REGAN/GETTY

actor, so he liked to speak in these different voices. We both had the same sense of humour too, because we grew up on *The Goons* first and then *Monty Python*. And we also both liked a drink at that point, so we could be quite dangerous together [laughs].

I love the song The *Bigger They Come* that you wrote with Steve Marriott in 1990 for the proposed Humble Pie reunion album. What happened with that project?
When we got back together in England, we wrote a song the first day. I said: "Do you want to take this further?" He said: "All right, mate." So I invited him to LA, where I was living at the time. So he came and got a place in Santa Monica. I had a makeshift studio in North Hollywood, and we would be there every day. I said: "There's only one way I can do this, Steve. We have to work sober." I wasn't drinking much at all by that point. He said: "All right, mate."

We worked for about two weeks. We had a bass player and a drummer and we were jamming. It was going great. We wrote *I Won't Let You Down, The Bigger They Come, Scratch My Back*… Then I noticed he was starting to slur a little. He had a Perrier bottle, and I realised it was white wine in it. I just said: "I can't do that, Steve. It's not good for me, and it's not good for our relationship."

We had a business meeting set up to talk about a record deal, but Steve never made it to the meeting, saying he got lost driving in from Santa Monica. I think he was always scared of big success, always scared to be pushed out there. If we'd made the record, we didn't plan to call it Humble Pie, we wanted to call it Marriott-Frampton. But the label people all wanted it to be called Humble Pie. The name recognition thing. But we said no, that was in the past. But with the drinking, finally I just said: "Steve, I'm sorry, this is not going to work for me." And that was it, really. He said: "All right, mate, I understand."

He did call me one more time before he went home to England, but he was incoherent. That just made it worse for me. It was very sad. I thought that he would go home and he'd think about it, then call me to say: "Let's give it another chance." And I believe he would have. But of course the day he got home, he fell asleep with a cigarette in his hand. And the rest is history, unfortunately.

In the mid-90s, Frampton joined Ringo's All-Starr Band, touring alongside friends including Jack Bruce and Joe Walsh. In 1998 he released *Frampton Comes Alive II*. Lightning didn't strike twice, but his humble aim was to keep reminding listeners what he did best. "I'm a live performer," he says.

The new century started with Frampton acting as a musical consultant, player and songwriter on *Almost Famous*, a blockbuster film written and directed by his longtime friend, former *Rolling Stone* writer Cameron Crowe.

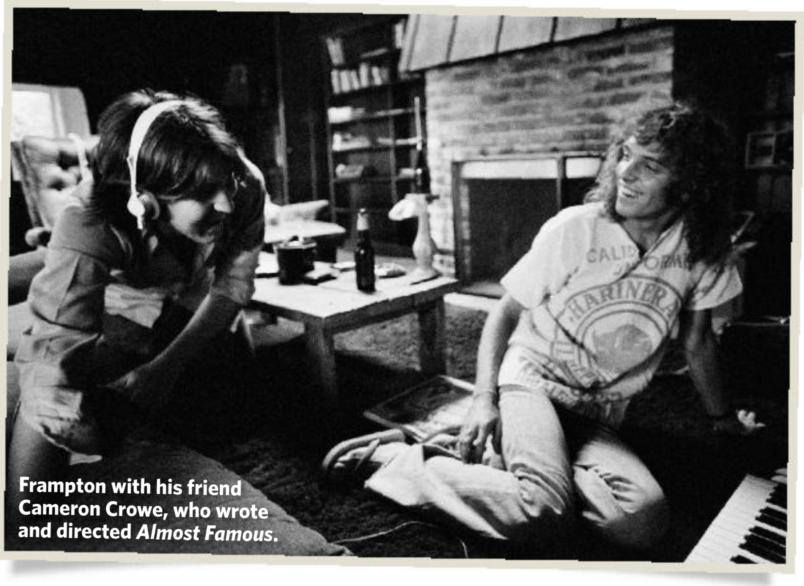
Performing with Ringo Starr's All Star Band in London in 2001.

You were an important part of *Almost Famous*. As well as writing songs and playing on the soundtrack, your job was making sure the band, Stillwater, looked authentic. You also had to teach guitar to actor Billy Crudup.
I felt like I had so much information to bring to the movie, because I'd been through it all. I opened for Black Sabbath, just like Stillwater. Rock movies hardly ever look right, you know? So I think Cameron wanted to make sure every detail was there, right down to what mics were right for the period. I enjoyed all the gadget part of it, but my main job was to make Billy Crudup look realistic. He had to be a mix of Jimmy Page and Paul Kossoff; they would watch movies of Led Zeppelin and Free. That's what it was based on. It's me and Mike McCready from Pearl Jam playing on the tracks. So I would learn the parts and show Billy what to do. He was like a sponge. Whatever information you gave him, he remembered. All the actors were like that. Cam asked me: "How will we know when Billy has it perfect?" And I said: "He'll have his fingers in the right place at the right time and he'll put his head back and he'll close his eyes." That's the moment we waited for.

"Steve Marriott was very insecure, but when he opened his mouth and sang and played he was something spectacular."

And you got to direct a scene.
John Toll, the Academy Award-winning cinematographer, comes up behind me and puts this huge pair of headphones with the microphone on it on my head and says: "You know the music better than I do. You're going to be calling the cameras." I said: "What?!" So I actually got to control four big Panavision cameras while we were shooting the concert scene. There I was going: "Okay, drum fill in three-two-one, go!" I enjoyed it so much. And then Billy was doing his guitar solo, and he got everything right: fingers on the neck, head thrown back, eyes closed. "Oh my god, we got it!" Cam and I were high-fiving.

Have you been approached about doing a film about your life?
We are in the process of making a documentary. Covid messed with us, obviously. We stopped, and now we're waiting for the final funding to be able to continue. There was a rush on music documentaries and it kind of slowed down. I haven't been approached to do a biopic. I think it's a story that's been told before. But I might be wrong. If they ever do, I hope that Cameron would direct it. He knows me so well.



Frampton with his friend Cameron Crowe, who wrote and directed *Almost Famous*.

TOP: SHUTTERSTOCK; BOTTOM: COURTESY OF PETER FRAMPTON

Do you have any favourite ways that you've been portrayed in pop culture?
I think my appearance on the ▷

Frampton (left) in a scene from the TV show *Madam Secretary*.

TV show *Madam Secretary* was such a nice thing. It all started because Téa Leoni's character was wearing a Frampton T-shirt on the show. I got a written slap from Tim Daly, her husband on the show and in real life, because I said jokingly to Téa: "Thanks for wearing me to bed" [laughs]. But we're all dear friends. Then there was *The Simpsons*. The casting director called and said: "Would you like to be in an episode of *The Simpsons*?" I said: "Have you got the right number?" Because my career was nowhere at that point. She said: "We've got Smashing Pumpkins, Sonic Youth, and you're headlining a Lollapalooza concert." I said: "But I wouldn't be headlining a Lollapalooza concert." And there was silence. Then I said: "Oh, I get it. You want me to be the old, crusty rock'n'roller who's been there, done that, hates everybody?" She said: "You've got it." It was so fun. They let me ad-lib, and what a treat to have them animate me.

In 2007, Frampton's rock guitar rave-up record *Fingerprints* won him his first-ever Grammy Award, for Best Pop Instrumental Album. "It was so great to be recognised for something that had no connection to *Frampton Comes Alive!*," he says. "It changed people's perception of me back to how it was in Humble Pie and my early solo days."

Along with that came a cosmic boomerang moment: the return of Frampton's iconic guitar, a 1954 Gibson Les Paul 'Black Beauty' that was thought to be destroyed. Back in 1980, when Frampton was touring South America, a cargo plane carrying his band's gear from Venezuela to Panama exploded on the runway. All of the instruments, including Frampton's prize Les Paul, were lost. Or so he believed. He's now nicknamed the guitar The Phoenix.

Tell us about the 1954 Les Paul, and how you were reunited with it thirty years after that horrible accident.

The guy that was guarding the remains of the plane that burned up on the runway in 1980 forgot to tell my road manager that he'd already taken the guitars off and sold three or four of them. So my guitars were floating around Caracas, in various different musicians' hands. For fifteen years the guy who ended up with the Black Beauty was playing it in clubs. Then it got a little hot. People started saying: "Hey, that guitar looks an awful lot like Peter Frampton's." So this guy stuck it in the closet and forgot about it.

New generation comes along, and his teenage son says: "Dad, that guitar in the closet doesn't play well. Can I take it somewhere to get it fixed so I can play it?" "Okay." Not realising what he was doing, the kid took it to this luthier. He opened the case and the luthier's eyes almost popped out of his head. He knew exactly what it was. He said to the kid: "Yeah, leave it with me overnight and I'll fix it up." Meanwhile, he called a luthier friend in Holland, sent pictures, and they quickly verified that it was my guitar. I got an email and there were the photos. That was 2010. Thirty years after it had been thought lost. Meanwhile, the kid comes back in the following day, and the luthier says: "You know what this guitar is, don't you?" The kid shoved it back in the case and ran off. Two years went by. Then the kid finally comes back and says: "I want five thousand dollars and a new Gibson, then you can give this back to Frampton." They tell me, but no one wants to bring it to me, because they think I'm going to have them arrested in Miami for stolen merchandise. I said: "No, no, no." Finally, the luthier has a friend who's the minister of tourism for Curacao. So Curacao buy the guitar for five grand, which I paid back. They brought it to Nashville and presented it to me in a little formal ceremony. Like a cultural exchange. There's a mini-documentary about it all on YouTube.

"No-one wants to bring [the guitar] to me, because they think I'm going to have them arrested for stolen merchandise."

In 2017, after falling twice on stage, Frampton was diagnosed with inclusion body myositis (IBM), a painless but progressive degenerative disorder that weakens the legs, arms, wrists and fingers. He announced his condition before embarking on a farewell tour in 2019, which the pandemic then interrupted halfway through and the rest of the shows were postponed. So three years and further postponements later, Frampton is coming to Europe in November to play what will be his final live shows. For all the anxiety he admits to having about it, he still comes across very upbeat.

"I think of my parents," he says. "During the Second World War my mum went through the Blitz, my dad went through every major battle in Europe and Africa, and they survived. That's why I'm able to pick myself up."

You've already completed more than half of your farewell tour, with the final dates coming this autumn in the UK and Europe. How has it been so far?

The American-Canadian portion was the most moving tour I've ever done. It's very emotional for me saying goodbye to anybody, let alone ten thousand people a night. They wouldn't let me leave the stage. In the end I had to say I'm not going to say goodbye, and I just waved. As I turned my back every night I'd well up. All of a sudden, in every city we played, every fan that ever was there in the seventies was back again. It was like the old days. Everything had come back around again. The crowds were unbelievably appreciative and warm. Different audience every night, but same emotion. I can't thank people enough for what they've given me. I'm a live performer above all, so that's the most moving thing for me. I don't know what to expect in the UK and the EU, but I'm hoping it's going to be along the same lines, because we had a blast.

How are you managing with your IBM?

Well… my legs are not good, and I've decided I am going to sit down on these upcoming tour dates in Europe. I can't stand. That would be dangerous for me now, because I get so carried away when I'm playing that I'm liable to fall over [laughs]. It's starting to affect my hands, but not enough yet, so I can still play a good lick. But I'll be honest, I'm anxious about it. I haven't played over there in so long, and I have progressed in my disease.

But you've just played your first gig in more than a year, at Buddy Holly's 85th Birthday Celebration. How did it go?

Well, I sat down for the first time ever on stage. And… it felt very comfortable [laughs]. Better than leaning on a piano. It was me, Steve Cropper, Albert Lee, Duane Eddy, a few others. We each did one Buddy song. The reason it meant so much to me is that the very first song I learned on guitar was *Peggy Sue*. I was probably nine years old. That would've been 1959. *Peggy Sue* came out in 1957. So it took England by storm. Buddy Holly was as big, if not bigger, in England than he was in America. So we did *Peggy Sue*, then we did *Lines On My Face* and *Do You Feel*. I told some stories and cracked a couple of jokes. It was fantastic. The warmth from the audience was just like the final tour.

In your memoir, you say of your career: "There's never been a master plan." If you could go back, would you change anything?

Only two things: I would've waited to make an album after *Comes Alive!*, and never put out *I'm In You*. *Breakin' All The Rules* would've been a much better follow-up record. And I wouldn't have done the *Sgt. Pepper* movie.

Any final words?

What did my mum used to say? "What is to be, will be sure to come true." I don't know what it means, but I've always lived by that [laughs]. ●

UK dates, info and tickets for Peter Frampton Finale – The Farewell Tour are available from myticket.co.uk/artists/peter-frampton

GETTY

"It's very emotional for me saying goodbye to anybody, let alone ten thousand people a night. As I turned my back every night I'd well up."

GETTY

HERE COMES THE SUN

They intended to make "a party record". Instead, *Sunrise On Slaughter Beach* is "a moody record, a darker record, and in some ways a heavier record than previous **Clutch** albums". Neil Fallon and Jean-Paul Gaster talk livestreams, impenetrable lyrics, jazz and getting the funk *in*.

Words: **Johnny Sharp**

Close observers of the two stompingly heavy, thrillingly ebullient recent singles put out by Maryland rockers Clutch might have noticed a few curious references in their lyrics: *Red Alert (Boss Metal Zone)* and *We Strive For Excellence* both seem to throw in cultural touchstones from a simpler age than the troubled one we now live in. The former asks: '*Can you pass the Voight-Kampff test?*' and '*Are you familiar with the Roy Batty Method?*', while also throwing in mentions of a '*Doc Tyrell*', and '*the Tannhauser Gate*'. All of which, movie buffs will know, come from seminal 1982 sci-fi film *Blade Runner*, while 'Boss Metal Zone' is the name of a classic guitar distortion pedal. The other, *We Strive For Excellence*, talks of how '*We pledge allegiance to the denim flag*' while throwing in talk of illegal M80 firecrackers, '*BMX grips*', a '*Farah Fawcett lighter*' and other minutiae familiar to the youth of the 1980s (especially American ones).

According to Clutch frontman and lyricist Neil Fallon, such details were the result of lockdown songwriting sessions in which the freedoms we were all missing suddenly came into focus sharply.

"I think going into writing the record [Clutch's new album *Sunrise On Slaughter Beach*], I was thinking, okay, I don't really want to write a bunch of lyrics that are going to constantly remind me of 2021 and all the things that went along with that. And as a parent, watching my son having to do home schooling and unable to interact with his friends, it really put into focus the joys of, you know, getting on your bike, planning to run away from home for half a day. It's sort of a rite of passage, and it made me write nostalgically about that because I felt bad for my son being unable to enjoy that kind of thing."

Then again, he admits that often songs come to life from a chance encounter or a phrase that sounds good. As was the case with *Boss Metal Zone*.

"I'll see a phrase out of context and it'll stick in my head. 'Boss Metal Zone' sounds so absurdly ⊳

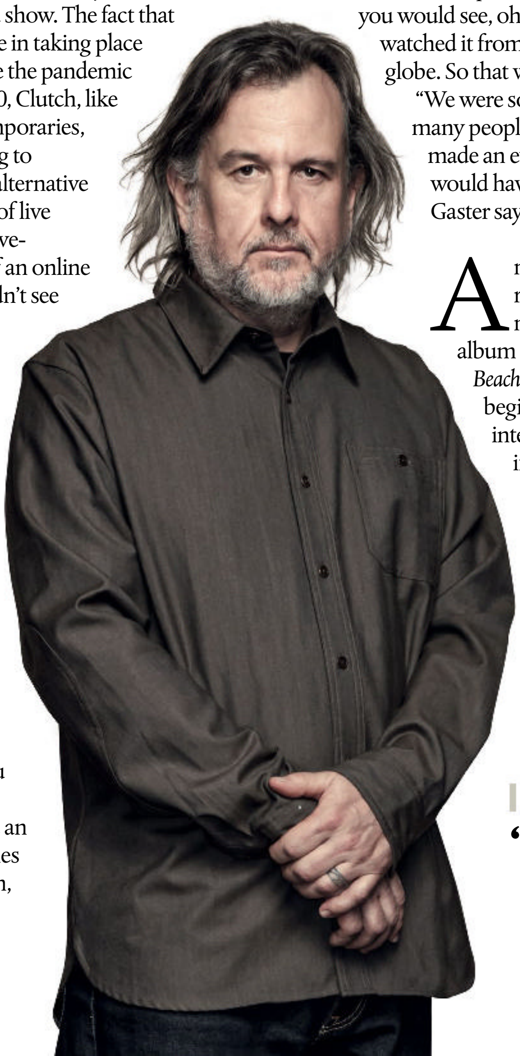
Experts in their field: (l-r) Neil Fallon, Jean-Paul Gaster, Dan Maines, Tim Sult.

1984 to me, like the logo on a heavy metal T-shirt you would get at the dollar store. It also sounded like a name for the binder you would take to school which would have a fake denim cover over it, and you would take a ballpoint pen and dig a Twisted Sister logo into it or something. All that stuff falls together for me in my memory bank. Along with stuff like *Blade Runner,* of course, which I loved back then and still love now."

Classic Rock is talking to Fallon and Clutch drummer Jean-Paul Gaster on a day off in Belfast before their rescheduled show. The fact that these dates are a year late in taking place tells a familiar tale. Once the pandemic took hold in March 2020, Clutch, like so many of their contemporaries, found themselves having to embrace an unfamiliar alternative universe in the absence of live shows, by performing live-streamed sets in front of an online audience that they couldn't see or hear, let alone flick a plectrum to, trusting that they weren't just shouting into the virtual void. For both Fallon and Gaster it was a surreal experience.

"We did the very first show just on Neil's laptop computer, which was sat in the corner of the room," Gaster explains.

"At first there's no adrenaline rush, like you get with people," says Fallon. "I kind of felt like an actor that has to do scenes in front of a green screen, interacting with objects that aren't there!"



"But once we got our heads around it, it was like when we were on stage than being in a practice room," Gaster adds. "There was an energy there and an intensity. It really felt like a show. And in that way it was very enjoyable."

Fallon: "For one of the shows, we told people that they could buy a vinyl record of it, which was nerve-racking because, you know, if you have a train wreck, that train wreck is going on an LP! But that kind of made it feel more like a live show if there was a bit of trepidation. Then after the fact you would see, oh, six thousand people watched it from various parts of the globe. So that was gratifying."

"We were so impressed with how many people took the time, and made an event of it and they would have friends come over," Gaster says.

Another effect the global restrictions had on the making of their new album *Sunrise On Slaughter Beach*, at least in the beginning, was on the intended mood of it, even if that didn't ultimately develop as expected.

"We had this idea that we were going to make kind of – for lack of a better word – kind of a party record," says Gaster. "Something that would be uplifting, a really fun album. But the more we wrote, the less it came out like that. It's a moody record, a darker record, and in some ways it's a heavier record than previous Clutch albums."

That rings true at times when listening to the record: the lead-off singles are certainly taking no prisoners in terms of intensity, and there's a lot of humour in there. Elsewhere, though, it's a more diverse listen, further confounding anyone who ever tagged Clutch with the various labels they've had over the past 30 years, whether it be 'alt.metal', 'stoner rock' or 'blues rock'. The nine songs range from the melodramatic take on the ancient vampire tale of *Mercy Brown* to the bluesy grunge lurch of the title track; from the jazz injections on *Three Golden Horns* to the windswept metal adventure of *Mountain Of Bone*; from the wistful closer *Jackhammer Our Names* to the surreal horror story of *Nosferatu Madre*.

Throughout, though, the thunderous bottom end is a constant characteristic – it feels like you're listening to a record created, and designed to be played, live at high volume. Underpinning the muscular riffs and a crunching rhythm section are gutsy grooves informed by the blues, and there's also a touch of organic funk in there. It's a trait, the band insist, that has seeped into their sound from their formative years growing up near Washington DC.

Clutch formed in 1990 out of a bunch of kids who grew up in Germantown, Maryland and went to hardcore shows in the city as well as soaking up more mainstream hard rock and metal sounds. But those weren't the only shows they were attending.

"When people ask about where did the groove come from in our music," Gaster explains, "I always point to the fact that there's a very

"We've always felt like outsiders, felt apart from any industry trends."

Jean-Paul Gaster

KEVIN NIXON

WILL IRELAND

specific kind of funk that was the sound of DC in the eighties. It was very, very popular and it was called go-go."

He refers to acts such as Trouble Funk and EU, who aren't often name-checked these days (not by rock bands, anyway) but who were the toast of the US capital back then.

"It's a very percussive kind of music," Gaster continues. "And the feeling that you got when you went to one of these shows was that it was a real party vibe. The band played for forty-five or fifty minutes straight. They didn't stop playing between songs, they'd segue from song to song. And the common denominator to all these songs is a really heavy back beat.

"So now, when I first hear a heavy riff, right away I think of Junkyard Band, I think of Rare Essence, Chuck Brown And The Soul Searchers. These are grooves that I grew up listening to, and they have become part of not only my DNA, but I think everybody's.

"Then there's other stuff too, of course, like a lot of reggae; we all really enjoyed that. And in the nineties there was a lot of hip-hop going on, whether it was Notorious B.I.G or Wu-Tang Clan. Gang Starr and Public Enemy were huge for us. So we just took all of these influences and we didn't discriminate, you know. We just took the stuff we liked then made our own thing out of it."

Those influences were explored more fully on albums such as 1999's *Jam Room* instrumental collection and in the band's side project the Bakerton Group, while Gaster and his bandmates, particularly Tim Sult, have regularly played with reggae-meets-stoner rock project Lionize.

There are neat touches of experimentation threaded through the new album that add ear-pricking moments, including the use of unusual instruments such as vibraphone (on *Three Golden Horns*, more of which later) and the theremin (on the sci-fi themed *Skeletons On Mars*).

"I enjoy picking up a new instrument," Gaster says of his vibraphone playing. "And I think it helps to expand not only the sound of the band, but my drumming as well. You know, if I practise on vibes for forty-five minutes, chances are when I get on to the drums I'm gonna play something different to what I would have played otherwise."

Fallon's use of the theremin [a weird, electronic instrument, famously used on Led Zeppelin's *Whole Lotta Love*], meanwhile, came from a similarly trial-and-error approach.

"I actually wanted to put a talk-box on there, because I've always loved it, but then it just kind of made it sound more like a Peter Frampton song than a sci-fi epic. So you had to try to find out. And then you heard the theremin, which is a lot more difficult to play than I realised. But now all of a sudden you're talking, you know, flying saucers in 1955 – which I love!"

"What keeps us going after all this time is that we still love making music together."

Jean-Paul Gaster

Gaster's drumming heroes include jazz players Elvin Jones and Jack DeJohnette, and some of those influences seeped into *Sunrise On Slaughter Beach* on *Three Golden Horns*, on which Clutch sound briefly like they're duelling with a be-bop quartet, injecting angular jazz chords and polyrhythms. Meanwhile, Fallon's ear-worm vocal hook insists – not entirely seriously, we can presume – that *'jazz music corrupts our youth'*. The lyrics, it turns out were inspired by the music.

"We were just in the middle of a jam, and I think we took a break," says Gaster. "We had the jazzy breaks in it, and we were talking about the saxophonist Rahsaan Roland Kirk, an amazing player and he was completely unique in his approach."

"He was able to play three horns at once – and very well at that," Fallon adds. "And that inspired the line: *'Roland Kirk's three golden horns'*. Sometimes you can have too much time, you can get too analytical, and you start writing from the brain, as opposed to the impulses of the heart. The phrase *'jazz music corrupts our youth'*, I just wrote it down in my little journal one day. And when I heard the jazzy feel on those passages as well, it felt like a good place for that line to live in."

That instinctive approach to lyric writing ▷

The band that plays together… Clutch have had the same line-up almost from day one.

“There’s been times where I have personally asked myself: ‘Is this sustainable – either mentally, emotionally, financially?’”

Neil Fallon

also informed the surreal nightmare of *Noseratu Madre*, in which Fallon sings: *‘I was accused of witchcraft aboard the Mayflower ship/They threw me overboard, ten stone of ballast chained to my legs.’* He grins at the mention of it.

“It all started when I just kind of laughed at myself when I said ‘Nosferatu Madre’. Like, how do you make a song out of that those two words? And it is kind of a campy, B-movie horror idea, like something from a Hammer film or something. Because no one was speaking Spanish on the Mayflower, but then again we’re not writing historical dissertation. It’s certainly absurd – and I love absurdity.”

Evidently so, judging by the title track, in which we are confronted with an apparent stream-of-consciousness journey through curious passages mentioning *‘blue-blooded freaks’* and *‘maritime tragedies’*, after informing us that: *‘I’m not betting on wild horses… I demand to shut my clam the old-fashioned way/ Under a strawberry moon bell hand and wearing no clothes.’*

Sounds great. But there aren’t any clues as to what it all means?

Fallon, a committed subscriber to the view that the listener should make of it what they will, offers only some background: “Well, Slaughter Beach is a real place in Delaware that we sometimes vacation at, which is also a protective wildlife preserve for horseshoe crabs and other species, but there’s just this Pink Floyd-esque surreal presence there. It’s along the banks of the Delaware Bay going into the ocean, and there are these giant World War II towers that kind of just come out of the sand dunes, and they were used to make sure the Germans weren’t coming up the Delaware Bay into Philadelphia. With the name Slaughter Beach there are several different versions why the place is called that [ranging from a Native-American massacre to the large numbers of crabs that don’t survive the spawning season]. But I like the name and I like that ambiguity.”

Whatever you make of such imagery, that track and the album in general sound satisfyingly epic, and they feel like the work of a band at the peak of their powers. Which begs the question from the two 50-something men: how do the four members of Clutch (bassist Dan Maines and lead guitarist Tim Sult make up the quartet alongside Fallon and Gaster), who have been in this band together for more than 30 years keep those creative juices flowing and retain their lust for live performance, at a time when many of their contemporaries would be comfortable with their armchair and slippers by this stage in their lives?

“What keeps us going after all this time?” Gaster asks himself. “Simple answer: we still love making music together. We were never in pursuit of being rock stars. Even back when we started, stuff that was on MTV or rock radio we found corny and we didn’t want to do that. We’ve always felt like outsiders, felt apart from any industry trends.

“Not long after we started, the grunge thing got big, so people tried to lump us in with that. And since then, so many labels, so many terms get thrown around, but we never felt the need to fit into those scenes or even fight against them. We never lost the thrill of just playing in a band.”

In recent years, the longevity of the band has doubtless been boosted by them creating their own label, Weathermaker Music, which Fallon believes allows them freedom from the pressure so many other artists feel under to forever pursue that mythical commercial ‘next step’.

“Some people find that kind of difficult to understand,” he says. “People still cling to the old business model of: you have to get signed by a label and sell more and more records. And to this day, I run into people that we’ve known for decades. And they’ll say: ‘Who are you signed with now?’ ‘Oh, we put out our own records.’ And they look at you like: [sympathetic face] ‘Ooh, sorry to hear that.’ Like you’re some kind of orphan! But I feel the exact opposite. Why would you sign to a label for seven albums or a three-sixty deal, when you’re basically in indentured servitude until they decide to drop you?”

Not that running your own show is a walk in the park, of course.

“There have been dark nights of the soul,” Fallon admits. “There’s been times where I have personally asked myself: ‘Is this sustainable – either mentally, emotionally, financially?’ But what I remain thankful for is being able to make a living in the creative arts in any capacity. And one thing that makes a difference is, we’re not saying: ‘Oh, this is the record that’s going to break us.’ You know. Ever. No one cares. We’re happy at the level we’re at.”

And Clutch are sustaining that level very nicely, thank you very much, due in no small part to a rock-solid fan base that ensures they can sell out shows like tonight’s gig in Belfast without many worries. But more importantly, while retaining the essential gut-punching heaviness that was always the essence of their appeal, they’re also subtly but surely expanding their musical horizons. And wherever your personal Slaughter Beach happens to be, whatever a ‘boss metal zone’ means to you, they sound like places you’ll want to hang out.

Sunrise On Slaughter Beach is out now via Weathermaker Music.

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WHO DARES WINS

It takes a brave man to change his band's style of music. It takes an even braver, and smarter, man to then do it again, as Darren Wharton did with **Dare**.

Words: **Dave Ling**

Although Dare's sound stabilised at the end of the 90s, the Oldham-based band spent the first few years of their career building expectations, only to then go and knock them down again. Following leader, frontman and keyboard player Darren Wharton's two-year spell as a member of Thin Lizzy, in 1988 Dare emerged with their debut *Out Of The Silence* – still talked of in hushed tones within AOR circles – only to then reinvent themselves as an altogether harder-rocking beast with follow-up *Blood From Stone*. It was 1991, and the band's label, A&M, craved their own equivalent of Guns N' Roses or Whitesnake. This enforced change in direction would ultimately sink the first incarnation of Dare, although Wharton maintains that they never broke up. Then with their third album they took another sharp left turn. With Wharton surrounded by a new set of faces, 1998's *Calm Before The Storm* was full of the music that *really* moved him: atmospheric, Celtic-infused melodies, delivered in emotional tones.

"Sometimes I feel like throwing myself off a bridge, because writing songs is never simple."

Darren Wharton

Talking to *Classic Rock* for our very first issue, in 1998, Wharton insisted: "When I go into HMV I don't want to be filed under 'heavy metal' any more. I want to be in with Pink Floyd and Genesis."

Nearly a quarter of a century later, with their recently released *The Road To Eden*, Dare's tenth album, that sentiment hasn't changed a bit.

Wharton had joined Lizzy at just 18, so the band's dissolution came as a shock. "We said goodbye at the airport after a tour and it felt like a break, that we'd be back," he recalls. "But then Phil [Lynott] got Grand Slam together and I realised that we were semi-broken up."

He moved from London back to Oldham and began the search for musicians, initially dabbling with a solo career, and signed a deal with Phonogram. This would put him out of the running when he was approached to play keyboards on Whitesnake's *1987* album. "I got a call from [Whitesnake guitarist] John Sykes when they were recording in Germany," he rues, "but my solo deal made it impossible."

The equally fresh-faced guitarist Vinny Burns, then on a bit of a Gary Moore trip, was a recommendation. And when an incognito Wharton went to check him out playing covers of *Empty Rooms* and *Parisienne Walkways* in a local pub he was blown away.

"When Daz [Wharton] called me I thought it was one of my mates winding me up," Burns says now, laughing. "But half an hour later we were sitting together in a pub and within a week we had formed a band."

"The chemistry was instant," Wharton says. "We both liked the same music and enjoyed a pint, and a month and a half later we had written most of *Out Of The Silence*."

With a line-up completed by bassist Martin 'Shelley' Shelton, keyboard player Brian Cox (today a professor and TV presenter) and drummer James Ross, the group started playing live. For ▷

AVALON

Darren Wharton (left) and Vinny Burns with Dare on the *Out Of The Silence* tour in '89.

a first-time lead vocalist it was tough for Wharton, who at first largely sang while behind banks of hardware, and playing a keytar for the set's rowdier moments.

After finding a manager, Keith Aspden (who also represented Talk Talk), in early 1987 Dare were thrilled to find themselves in the midst of a bidding war. "Keith brought the heads of six or seven labels up to Oldham to see us play a gig at a squash club," Wharton remembers. "We got five offers that night, and eventually went with A&M."

Dare were dispatched to California, where they recorded with producers Mike Shipley and Larry Klein at a studio owned by Joni Mitchell. Little did they, or anyone else, of course, know, but the likes of Def Leppard, Guns N' Roses and Aerosmith were about to take over the planet.

"While we were over there, everything changed," Burns reflects today. "A&M had put us with Mike Shipley, who had just done Whitesnake and the Scorpions, but we could feel everything shifting. We made that album a year too late."

"Mike Shipley had worked with Mr Mister and Def Leppard, so maybe it's a little too clean-sounding," Wharton adds. "It could have been a bit rawer, but to me it's still a wonderful album."

"We could feel everything shifting. We made [1988 debut *Out Of The Silence*] a year too late."

Vinny Burns

Although *Out Of The Silence* delivered three lower-level hits – *Abandon*, *Nothing Is Stronger Than Love* and *The Raindance* – progress was tough.

"I remember hearing Steve Wright play us on Radio 1, but I was particularly upset that Piccadilly Radio, Manchester's local station, wouldn't play us," Wharton says. "We soon realised how hard it is for a young band to gain acceptance."

Neither did the rock press know what to make of Dare. "Phil Wilding became a mate of mine, but his review of the album in *Kerrang!* said I sang like a strangled cat," Wharton continues, laughing. "He might have had a point."

(In fact, Jon Hotten reviewed the album in K!, stating: 'Dare are there to be awed, AOR fans will lap it up' – Ed.)

A&M were about to ramp up the pressure on the fledgling singer, demanding that he put aside playing keyboards to focus on fronting the show. His first gig standing centre-stage was in front of 12,000 people in Sweden as guests of Europe. (This was one of several high-profile tours, others included ones with Jimmy Page and Gary Moore).

"I was absolutely terrified," Wharton admits. "It was something I really didn't want to do. But I had spent time watching videos of David Coverdale or whoever and borrowing the moves I liked, and I'd practise them in front of the mirror."

That change presented Brian Cox with the space to flourish. Wharton and Burns both speak highly of the keyboard player, whose head they say was always buried in a book by the noted American physicist Richard Feynman when they were on tour.

"We had grabbed Brian when he had a year out on the way to university," Burns explains, while Wharton says nostalgically: "On the bus Brian and I had some fascinating conversations about space and the possibility of alien life. I have very fond memories of those couple of years he was in the band."

By this time, however, the proverbial shit was about to hit the fan. Determined to place Dare among the big-haired hard rockers of the early 1990s, A&M brought in the in-demand Keith Olsen to produce their second album, *Blood From Stone*.

"Keith had just done Whitesnake [*1987*] and the Scorpions [*Crazy World*], but it was a wrong decision for two reasons," Wharton says. "Firstly,

Thin Lizzy in Japan, September 1980: (l-r) Brian Downey, Snowy White, Phil Lynott, Scott Gorham, Darren Wharton.

MAIN: PG BRUNELLI/ICONICPIX; INSET: GETTY

I wasn't the kind of singer for that music. Secondly, it wasn't where our hearts lay. *Blood From Stone* would have been an awesome album with David Coverdale singing it. I should have known better, but we were young and pushed into a corner. I wish that we had stuck to our guns."

"There are so few keyboards on *Blood From Stone*," Burns marvels. "There should have been a logical progression, but it kind of felt like the band had skipped an album."

Once again Dare scored a couple of minor hits, with *We Don't Need A Reason* and *Real Love*, but most rock fans saw through what was going on. Dare were also no fools.

"With *Blood From Stone* we knew we'd have to shift two million albums just to break even, so the writing was on the wall," Burns states.

"I'd had a conversation with our manager, who'd said A&M was being sold as a company and that we were unlikely to make a third album with them," says Wharton. "But the band *didn't* break up. It is true that Vin and I had a falling out in Germany one night, but losing a record deal is never easy, especially when you feel you have something left to give."

Burns went on to play with Asia, Ten, Ultravox and others. Meanwhile, a demoralised Wharton moved to North Wales, where he met a young guitarist called Richard Dews. At around the same time, Wharton was invited to be a part of a Thin Lizzy reunion.

"I prefer to call it a tribute, because there can be no Thin Lizzy without Phil," he explains, keen to make the distinction. "But Scott [Gorham, guitar] and John Sykes decided to do a run of dates, and I joined them. In my view, nobody but Scott and Brian [Downey, drums], along with John and myself, has the right to play those songs, and at the end of the day people still want to hear them. That's how I feel."

Although he has no clue how it happened, Wharton's demos fell into the hands of German label MTM Records, who were sufficiently impressed to release them as the third Dare album, *Calm Before The Storm*, in 1998.

"I think we got ten grand at the most from that, but it allowed me to buy a digital desk and build my own studio," Wharton says. "Rather than pay to hire a producer, I bought books on how to do it myself. The album sounded horrible, but the songs were great, and gradually I learned how to do it."

Dare recorded two more albums for MTM (2001's *Belief* and 2004's *Beneath The Shining Water*) before taking the plunge to launch what Wharton freely acknowledges as a cottage industry. "I set up my own label, Legend Records, and got a bank loan to buy another desk – a better one. Dare was back up and running again," he adds proudly.

But it's a new and fundamentally different Dare. "The current sound has much more of a Celtic vibe," Wharton agrees. "Incredibly, we got on Radio 2; Terry Wogan absolutely loved *Belief*.

"I look at bands like Pink Floyd and Dire Straits with admiration because they just do what they do," he adds. "I want to break those chains of the past."

Nevertheless, the returns of Burns and Nigel Clutterbuck (Dare's second bass player) in 2008 and '14 respectively have gradually restored some of those links. Released back in April, *The Road To Eden*, their tenth album, offers their best blend yet of old and new – specifically its rousing opener *Born In The Storm* and the final track, *Thy Kingdom Come*, which features an epic solo from Burns.

"We wanted to write an album that would be fun to play live," Wharton says. "With that extra level of guitars that comes from Vinny, some of the aggressiveness is back."

Although it will never be enough for Dare fans who still hanker after a full album of AOR-meets-pomp majesty, the band don't lose sleep over managing such expectations.

"We won't make another album in the style of *Out Of The Silence*," Burns comments. "If we did, everyone would see it as a cynical ploy."

They didn't make another album like *Out Of The Silence*, but in 2018 the band recorded a new version of it, although that was for entirely different reasons.

"We don't get a penny from that album, nor from *Blood From Stone* – not a cent," Wharton fumes, clearly aggrieved. "There was a plan for a label to remaster and re-release it, but thanks to Universal, who own it now, it all fell through. We still play three or four of those songs every night, and personally I feel that we should own our own music. So we made our own version of it."

In another early interview with *Classic Rock*, Wharton proclaimed proudly: "It's amazing what can be achieved through stubbornness." Today, with a 12-date UK tour beginning in early October, it's a credo that Dare continue to live by.

"I wouldn't say stubbornness so much; we're not trying to prove anyone wrong or anything," Wharton shrugs. "And of course it's true that it isn't easy to keep on going. But I live and breathe this music. Sometimes I feel like throwing myself off a bridge, because writing songs is never simple, but our whole lives have been music.

"As for the people who try to tell us how our music should and shouldn't sound, well… nobody knows Dare better than Vinny and me," he concludes. "We are aware of the boundaries of what Dare can and should be, and we stick within them. And it seems to work pretty well."

"We are aware of the boundaries of what Dare can and should be, and we stick within them."

Darren Wharton

The Road To Eden is available now via Legend Records. Dare's UK tour begins on October 6.

Fields of dreams: Dare in 2022.

Wharton and Burns with Dare at Sweden Rock Festival, June 2015.

INSET: SHUTTERSTOCK

MIDNIGHT COWBOYS

The Cult have always seen themselves as outsiders, "never really accepted into the rock buddy club". Ian Astbury and Billy Duffy talk about new album *Under The Midnight Sun*, and their "simple vision to make guitar-oriented rock".

Words: **Rob Hughes**

June 8, 1986. The Cult are playing to a bumper audience of 40,000 at Finland's Provinssirock, the second-largest festival in the Nordics after Roskilde. They've been touring the world for the best part of nine months and the end is in sight. It's late, although night has yet to fall as the band play a set-list dominated by songs from their recent breakthrough album, *Love*.

"The stage had real flowers in front of it and we were playing in daylight," recalls frontman Ian Astbury. "Afterwards, around four o'clock in the morning, I was walking around, hanging out, and the sun was still up. It was this anomalous moment in the northern hemisphere where the sun never goes below the horizon. I was looking around at this incredible halcyon scene, with people making out, drinking, conversing. It was just one of those special moments. You never forget the feeling, like a lived experience."

Fast forward to 2020 and Astbury is at home in LA during the global lockdown. He began sifting through some of The Cult's archive, including Provinssirock '86, shot for Scandinavian TV. "Rewatching the footage just brought it all back," he says. "It was right in the middle of the pandemic and I'm in East Los Angeles – police cars are being burned, there's gunshots, rioting, chaos and pandemonium, fireworks every night. So everyone's on edge. And I'm remembering this beautiful moment while being in this polarised moment in time that we were all in. I tried to put more of a positive tack on it, I guess, and thought: 'We are all under a midnight sun right now. Our destiny is in our hands, individually and collectively.'"

This juxtaposition of the idyllic and the hellish served as inspiration for The Cult's new album, *Under The Midnight Sun*. Produced by Englishman Tom Dalgety, the man behind recent successes for Ghost, Royal Blood and Pixies, it feels like something of a reset. This is a leaner and more focused Cult, with much less reliance on the transatlantic rock tropes they've tended to fall back on in recent times. The kind of English-sounding record, in fact, that has its noisy antecedents in that post-punk spirit of 1986.

"From a personal perspective, I called this out as a blues-rock-free zone," explains guitarist and co-songwriter Billy Duffy. "It became apparent that certain types of my musical influences were not going to be required for this record, and certain other ones were going to be leant on more. So instead of fighting that, I just went with it. The thing that was being left out was any of the kind of more bluesy 'rawk' influences that are in a lot of The Cult's music since the mid-eighties. We tried to slightly eliminate that North American sound. So is it like early Cult? I don't know. Can sixty-year-old guys make music like twenty-two-year-olds?"

> **"We've always been on a journey with The Cult. We're always transitioning in some way."**
> **Billy Duffy**

Under The Midnight Sun isn't the work of aging rockers trying to reclaim their lost youth. It's a thoughtful, measured and sometimes disarming album, full of tone and unexpected texture. Venomous riffs are tempered by ➢

TIM CADIENTE/PRESS

strings and cinematic flourishes, acoustic passages lead into towering rock vistas. It's the music of veterans who are still energised by the creative process, by the idea of transformation.

"Ian and I talked about trying to make the songs a little shorter on this album," Duffy explains. "We were kind of asking ourselves: 'How come we used to say everything in under four minutes and now it takes five or six?' So we wanted simplicity and brevity in terms of the music. We've always been on a journey with The Cult. We're always transitioning in some way."

Back in that busy summer of Provinssirock '86, The Cult were transitioning fast. In the space of three short years they'd gone from unknown goth-punk upstarts to indie-psych heroes (largely due to 1985's magnificent single *She Sells Sanctuary*) and were on the brink of taking on America with the Zeppelin-sized album *Electric*. The Stateside transformation was fully complete come the end of the decade, in the form of big-selling power-chord monster *Sonic Temple*, a top-three album in the UK.

Duffy insists there's never been a grand master plan. He and Astbury first hooked up in the spring of 1983. Astbury had spent the previous year and a half as leader of Yorkshire's Southern Death Cult, while Duffy had already moved through The Nosebleeds in his native Manchester, followed by a relocation to London and stints with the Studio Sweethearts and Theatre Of Hate.

Electric: The Cult in full flow live.

"Ian came down to London from Bradford with a carrier bag and overcoat," Duffy recalls. "And I lived in Brixton, in a place that was basically one step before a squat. We sat there and went: 'Right, you've left your band and I've been fired from mine. So let's form a new one.' It's quite a quaint story, really: two little post-punk tykes get together with this vision of forming a big rock band. We just had a simple vision that we wanted to make guitar-oriented rock, and not be sidelined or distracted by whatever the flavour of the month was. Just crack on with it. Which is what we did. And to an extent that's still what we do."

"I saw Billy and realised he could *really* play," Astbury remembers. "Also we hit it off, the chemistry was there from the start. I liked Billy. He was cheeky, Manc, smart, savvy, independent. Knew his way around. Had a little bit more experience than I had. And he started hanging out with us, because he'd been in bands and was kind of an outsider too, from the north."

"The Cult have endured because there's definitely that authenticity to what we do."

Ian Astbury

At surface level, the pair may seem like unlikely companions: Astbury the showy frontman steeped in esoterica, Duffy the less voluble foil and diligent guitar player; the poet and the pragmatist. Yet they're bonded by more than just music. One of the key songs on the *Under The Midnight Sun* (reviewed on page 70) is *A Cut Inside*, a deliciously abrasive track that finds both men at their most intense. *'No sweet surrender, outsiders forever,'* cries Astbury's recurring motif, as Duffy's hard-wired riff motors freely.

This theme of outsiderdom has been a constant in their lives. Astbury, born in the Wirral town of Heswall to parents of English and Scottish descent, had a peripatetic upbringing. "I was going backwards and forwards from Liverpool to Glasgow for about eleven and a half years," he explains. "And then we went to live in Canada. I'm an immigrant kid in a new country, surrounded by all these kids from different backgrounds. One of my best friends was from Kingston, Jamaica, and there were indigenous kids too. We were definitely different and we were ostracized. All of a sudden I am *other*. So thank god for punk rock. Thank god for David Bowie; I heard him and thought: 'This is where the action is! The action *is* on the outside of the mainstream, the pedestrian, the everyday."

Duffy grew up in working-class Wythenshawe, jumping on buses as a teenager to sneak into rock gigs in Manchester, often at the Free Trade Hall: Lynyrd Skynyrd, Rush, Blue Öyster Cult, the Hunter Ronson Band: "I saw Bill Nelson and Be-Bop Deluxe and went home and tried really hard to play stuff like *Maid In Heaven* and *Adventures In A Yorkshire Landscape*. Then I saw Johnny Thunders and wanted to be him for ten minutes. Then I saw Steve Jones play and I *definitely* wanted to be him."

Outliers to a man, Nelson, Thunders and Jones would all serve as reference points for The Cult, both practically and symbolically. Tastemakers have always tended to give The Cult a rough ride. "Even with Death Cult, people would look at us and go: 'Northern goths. Simpletons. What do they know?'" says Duffy. "That London media elitism was going on back then, where you're not being taken as seriously as other bands who might be drinking in the right pub or hanging out with the right people. That was the world that me and Ian inhabited in the eighties.

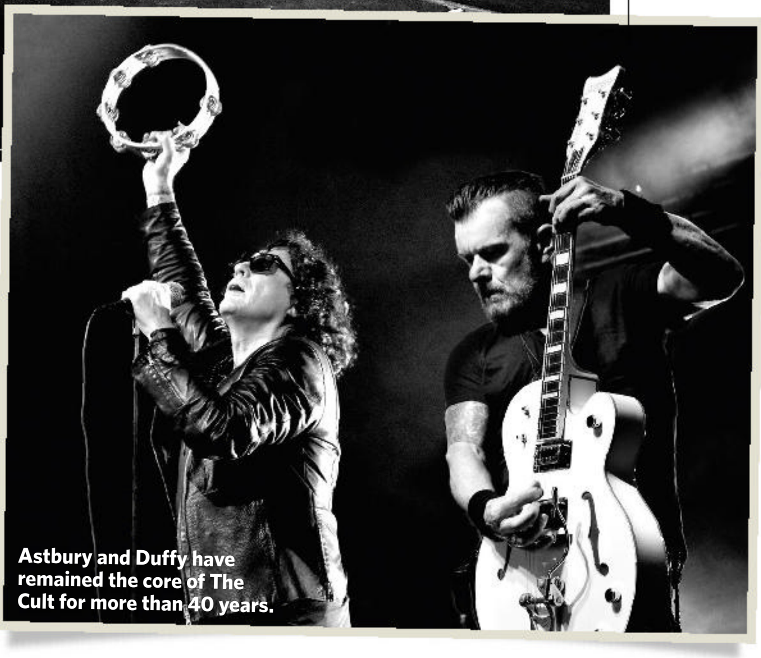
"It doesn't really matter to me now," he continues, "but that outsider thing has been thematic if you look back at The Cult's career. Even when we started doing really well and got into arenas and became a big rock band, we were never really embraced or accepted into the rock buddy club. It's interesting to note that in a forty-year career The Cult have won one award that I'm aware of. That was in 1985, for American College Music's Single of the Year, for *She Sells Sanctuary*. It was presented to us by Yoko Ono in New York, which was pretty cool. So we'll never be fully accepted as bona fide, no matter what we do."

It's hard to decipher if this truly rankles with Duffy and Astbury. But after a career laden with multi-platinum records, and for a band who still pack out arenas on both sides of the Atlantic, it must seem like something of a deliberate snub. "With all fair due to The Cult, we still haven't been able to crack the glass ceiling of being acknowledged in the UK," Astbury concedes. "I think we've only ever been invited to one awards show. It kind of sticks in your craw a little bit, but it doesn't really matter anyway, because all the institutions are disappearing. It's way more integrated and multi-dimensional now. The music business isn't as segregated as it once was."

Under The Midnight Sun is The Cult's first album in six years. They've clearly been in no rush since 2016's Bob Rock-produced *Hidden City*. The catalyst appears to be Tom Dalgety, who started turning up at Cult gigs and

making overtures about working together. Before long they found themselves in the studio. "It just felt like the right time," says Astbury. "There was definitely an energy with Tom, and a chemistry. It was just that natural cycle of trying to get together and create again, an intuitive thing."

The Cult cut a bunch of demos in LA, then the pandemic struck. While Astbury stayed home in California, Duffy preferred to sit it out back in England with Dalgety. The pair repaired to the Wye Valley, to the famed Rockfield Studios, scene of The Cult's 1984 debut *Dreamtime*, to shape backing tracks.



Astbury and Duffy have remained the core of The Cult for more than 40 years.

Duffy grasped the opportunity readily. "I'd got sick and tired of making records in Los Angeles," he explains. "Personally I found it a very uninspiring place to be creative. I'd been longing for the good old days of tea and toast and frosty mornings in England, so I got pretty spoiled. Also, being in a residential situation meant that I could knuckle down, create a bubble and stay in it."

As Duffy and Dalgety shaped the sound and tonality of the tunes, they began to take on the features of what the guitarist calls "the new classic Cult, fresh yet familiar". There are certainly echoes of the pre-*Electric* era on tracks like lead-off single *Give Me Mercy*. "That was intentional," Duffy adds. "I think we'd kind of fully explored that other rock style with *Choice Of Weapon* [2012] and *Hidden City*."

Over in LA, fresh from reacquainting himself with Provinssirock '86, Astbury set about adding lyrics that suggested a way forward from what he saw as the malaise of our current age. "*Give Me Mercy* could actually be titled *Give Me Mercy And A New Language*,'" he posits. "Because we're not hearing each other, nobody's listening. We need another way of communicating."

Astbury reached deep into his long-held interest in mythology and literature – the Beats, Buddhism, "philosophical entertainer" Alan Watts, the writings of Joseph Campbell, and so on – to come up with lyrics that deal with human interconnectivity and the need to grasp the moment.

"Everything has changed," he says, addressing the sweeping global events of recent years. "So it's about these themes of regeneration and rebirth: build, create, destroy, create. It's an archetypal theme. We can't go back to yesterday, we can never recreate that moment again. We're *in* the moment. And that's central to The Cult's DNA."

The Cult are a five-piece these days, rounded out by keyboard player Damon Fox, drummer John Tempesta and new bassist Charlie Jones, but the central core of that DNA will always be Astbury and Duffy. It's a band, and a partnership, that endures, often despite the odds. "We're the heart and we have been since day one," Astbury considers. "And we're very different guys. But at the end of the day there's a real empathy for each other. I know where Billy came from and the environment he grew up in. I saw him at shows, I saw him in the audiences, I met his parents. And I think that really bonds you together. It's such a foundational thing. And of course there's our love of music."

Duffy is of a similar mind. "I think that me and Ian are different enough, and yet alike enough, to find the common ground to be able to work together," he says. "We both do things with other people outside the band, but I think our destiny will always be entwined as The Cult. You're lucky if you find somebody like that. A lot of great musicians go through their lives without ever finding that other half that makes two plus two equal five. That's what elevates it and makes it special. And I think me and Ian both understand that together we're greater than anything we could achieve outside of that."

It's possible to discern common threads running through The Cult's body of work: a fierce independence of spirit; a shape-shifting kind of sensibility; a resolute belief in the transformative properties of rock'n'roll; the eternal power of the riff.

Astbury looks back and sees a multitude of defining characteristics. "Permanent duality, contradiction, lived experience," he concludes. "It's all there. We've definitely experienced everything from birth, death, divorce, health issues, mental health issues, all of it. The whole spectrum of human experience – poverty, material wealth, loss of material wealth. So I'd say being human is probably the thread. And as raw as that is, it's true. That's why The Cult have endured, because there's definitely that authenticity to what we do and it's nothing contrived. I don't think you can really pull the wool over people's eyes in that way. You know what you're gonna get. And we have had a lot put on us over the years."

The Cult's story is about much more than simple survival. New album *Under The Midnight Sun* proves that men of a certain vintage are still capable of creating wild and wonderful music – forward-facing music at that – without a great deal of compromise.

"We've always been an instinct band, we've always gone with our gut," Duffy reflects. "And luckily we've got more things right than we have wrong – and we've got plenty wrong. Otherwise we wouldn't exist, we wouldn't still be here, playing at the level that we still are. We've been headlining amphitheatres in America this summer and I'm sixty-one years of age. Who'd have thought that? We're not playing The Dog And Duck. Things ain't that bad."

***Under The Midnight Sun* is released on October 7 via Black Hill.**

IT'S ONLY BLOODY ROCK'N'ROLL!

Hounded by self-appointed guardians of the world's uncorrupted youth, stalked by religious groups, shot at, **WASP** could easily have packed it in. But after 40 years "we're still here", says mainman Blackie Lawless. "Which I'm sure some people aren't happy about."

Words: **Dave Everley**

Blackie Lawless knew things had got out of hand when somebody tried to kill him. It was 1985, and the mastermind behind controversial shock rockers WASP was America's new favourite bogeyman. It's not clear exactly why the puritanical right objected to Lawless and his band. It could have been the fact that their name reputedly stood for 'We Are Sexual Perverts'. It might have been that their debut single was a leering ode to sex, titled *Animal (Fuck Like A Beast)*, with a sleeve featuring a close-up of Lawless's crotch in a ridiculous buzzsaw codpiece. Or maybe it was their infamous live shows, featuring topless models tied to racks, and the frontman hurling chunks of raw meat out into the audience. It's a real head-scratcher.

Anyway, back to that alleged assassination attempt. Lawless had a place in the Hollywood Hills at the time, surrounded by a bunch of scrub and brush. As he ambles out of his house on this particular day, all six-foot-four of him, he sees some guy lurking in the near distance, 30 or 40 yards away, watching him. As soon as the guy clocks that Blackie has spotted him, he dives into the bushes.

"That's a little odd," Blackie thinks as he gets into the 1967 E-Type Jaguar his infamy had bought him and fires it up to head to the studio where WASP are recording their second album, *The Last Command*.

It's not until he get on the freeway that things start going wrong. As the needle hit 55mph, one of his front wheels comes off and spins away in front of him. The car begins to swerve across all four lanes. As Lawless wrestles with the steering wheel, he glances in his rearview mirror and sees an 18-wheel truck bearing down on him.

"That's it," he thinks. "I'm gonna die right here." Except he doesn't die. He slams on his brakes, the truck driver slams on his breaks, there's smoke everywhere. After a few hairy seconds the Jag screeches to a halt, and so, miraculously, does the truck. There's just a couple of feet between them.

Blackie manages to get the car to a mechanic he knows, and the grease monkey drops a bombshell: "These wheels have been tampered with," he tells Blackie. "You should be dead."

"The older generation saw us as something absolutely dangerous, and that we had to be stopped."

Looking back at that alleged attempt on his life almost four decades later, Blackie Lawless is sanguine. "I would say the bulk of our fans saw what we were doing as radical," he says now. "Maybe ten per cent saw the humour in it. But the older generation saw us as something absolutely dangerous, and that we had to be stopped."

It wasn't just homicidal religious nut-jobs who misunderstood WASP. The whole world has been getting them wrong for the past 40-odd years. Sure, in their original liver 'n' codpiece

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

incarnation they were the embodiment of 80s heavy metal thunder and damnation – an OTT Marvel Comics update of Alice Cooper's slyly subversive shock-rock from a decade earlier.

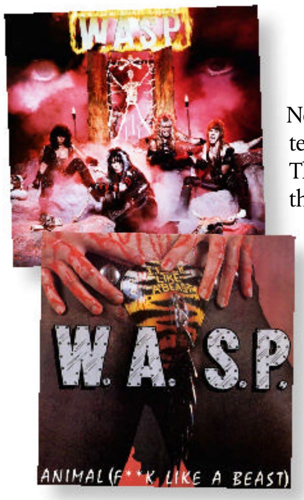
Yet WASP were way more than the blood-drenched bozos they've long been pegged as. They could play dumb when they needed to – hit singles such as *Wild Child*, redneck-baiting drinking anthem *Blind In Texas* and *Mean Man* were bolshy 80s metal anthems whose brains were hanging out of their pants. But playing dumb and being dumb are two separate things. Mötley Crüe, bless 'em, were top of the medal table at heavy metal's Stupid Olympics. WASP, on the other hand, were the smartest dumb band on the planet.

Exhibit A in the case for the defence: their music. Lawless's singing voice may sound like he downs sandpaper smoothies for breakfast, but he grew up listening to The Beatles and The Who, and those bands' melodic genius is evident in his band's best songs. "I often said WASP was really an electric version of the Everly Brothers," he says. Which isn't quite as ridiculous as it sounds. "It was based on that two-part harmony. To this day, you listen to our records and it's all harmony-based."

Exhibit B in the case for the defence: Lawless himself. Like Arthur Brown, Alice Cooper or anyone who has ever had the words 'shock rocker' shoved in front of their name by a tabloid newspaper, there was a fierce intelligence behind the schtick. And Lawless was smart enough to know when to ditch that schtick, wrong-footing his critics with 1989's grown-up, (largely) shock-free *The Headless Children*, an album that stands as one of the era's great unsung masterpieces.

Still, WASP's infamy and renown passed with the 1980s. They never did become as big as their contemporaries Mötley Crüe, let alone Guns N' Roses, a band for whom they undoubtedly helped prime innocent ears. But unlike both of those bands, they've continued to make great records on a semi-regular basis – 2007's *Dominator* or 2015's *Golgotha* could go toe-to-toe with old-school WASP classics such as 1984's self-titled debut or follow-up *The Last Command*.

"We're still here," says Lawless. "Which I'm sure some people aren't happy about."



Before Blackie Lawless was born, his creator could have been a baseball star. Back then he was plain Stephen Duren, a tall kid from Staten Island with a mean throwing arm and a dream of playing in the professional leagues. He'd got the nickname Blackie early on, on account of his jet-black hair. "Part of my Native Indian heritage," he says proudly.

Somewhere along the way, rock'n'roll got its hooks into him. He'd watched a bunch of face-painted glam-rockers he knew emerge from the clubs of the Big Apple to define American hard rock in the mid-70s. "I was friends with Ace Frehley, and I got a chance to see Kiss being born," he says. "I identified with the way Gene and Paul were running their camp."

But it was another hometown band who gave him his first break. Ever the sharp operator, he'd got to know inelegantly wasted glam-punks the New York Dolls. In 1975 the 19-year-old Blackie was down in Florida trying to make something of himself, when an on-their-last-legs Dolls passed through town.

"I was at sound-check and [bassist] Arthur Kane came up to me with a strange look on his face," says Lawless. "I think: 'Oh no, what have I done wrong?' But he pulls me aside goes: 'There's trouble here. Do you want to join the band?'"

A week later, Lawless was the guitarist in the New York Dolls, replacing the terminally whacked-out Johnny Thunders. "I walked into a situation that was effectively five guys trying to be Jim Morrison, and I could not relate to that at all," he says. "But you're nineteen years old and you're looking to get off the ground somehow."

He played just two gigs with the Dolls before the wheels came off the whole thing. It wasn't a total write-off: he and Kane schlepped across the country to LA, where they put together the short-lived Killer Kane Band (on the one EP they made, Lawless is credited as Blackie Goozeman). Soon Kane headed back to New York, but his protégé stayed put.

A string of bands followed: Sister (who briefly included a bassist named Frank Ferrana, soon to change his name to Nikki Sixx); Circus Circus; a blink-and-you'll-miss-it stint in Sunset Strip quasi-legends London. Along the way, Blackie Goozeman changed his stage name, taking inspiration from American football player Burton Lawless. And thus Blackie Lawless was born, and soon after so was WASP.

To hear Lawless describe it, the early-80s Sunset Strip scene was as much gladiatorial arena as it was non-stop bacchanal. "There was a camaraderie, but it was waning," he says. "People would step on each other's bodies to get to the top.

"All these people from little towns across America had come to LA to make it. They were all these type-A personalities. They'd been voted 'Most Popular' or 'Most Likely To…' in their little towns, and they get there and suddenly they realise the competition is extraordinarily fierce. When you peel away the veneer of anything like that you're gonna see where the ugliness is. People would get used up really quickly."

Lawless had been around long enough by that point to know he didn't want to be one of them. Rather than duking it out in the clubs with all the other bands trying to get a deal, WASP holed up in the studio to hone the songs that would appear on their debut album.

"When we started we had no intention of playing live," he says. "We demoed that first album four times. By the time we finished the fourth one, me and Chris looked at each other and said: 'Okay, these are good enough to take out and test in front of people.'"

'Chris' was Chris Holmes, WASP's man-mountain guitarist, and Chewbacca to Lawless's Han Solo. Holmes's wild streak was the polar opposite of Lawless's laser-focused ambition – the brawn and the brains. When they finally did hit the clubs, the pair's physical presence alone made the band an attention-grabbing proposition. And then there was all the other stuff.

"I'd love to tell people that there was some master plan, but that's not the way it happened," Lawless admits now. "We said: 'Are we just gonna stand there and just look at each other? Or are we gonna try and do some sort of show?'"

WASP's performances made Alice Cooper's show look like a pre-teens pantomime. There ➢

"I'd love to tell people that there was some master plan, but that's not the way it happened."

WASP in the 80s: (l-r) Tony Richards, Blackie Lawless, Randy Piper, Chris Holmes.

GETTY

Great balls of fire! 1980s Blackie Lawless in full flow.

© GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

Chris Holmes (and mum) in the infamous drunk-in-his-pool scene in the film *The Decline Of Western Civilisation Part II: The Metal Years.*

was fire and flash-bombs. Lawless hacked up raw meat with an axe and hurled the pieces into the audience. He drank blood theatrically from a skull (at one stage they headlined a blood drive for the Red Cross, only for the latter to reportedly ditch the supplies they'd received after hearing rumours that Lawless was drinking animal blood). And then there was the 'highlight' of the show, in which a hooded woman was brought on stage, only to have her throat 'slit'. It was tasteless, of course, and it certainly wouldn't wash today, but it got WASP noticed. As did their debut single, *Animal (Fuck Like A Beast).*

Released in April 1984, *Animal* would provide an early indicator of what was to come. WASP's record company, Capitol, blanched at releasing it, and enlisted rising UK indie label Music For Nations to put it out and take the flak instead. Forget the attention-grabbing title, it's an 80s metal Hall Of Famer – even if it's not quite the Everly Brothers. That brilliance extended across WASP's self-titled debut album via tracks such as *Sleeping In The Fire, L.O.V.E Machine* and immortal self-empowerment anthem *I Wanna Be Somebody*.

In the past, Lawless has talked about *Animal* being a deliberate shock tactic, an attempt to grab people's attention. Today he sidesteps the question of what he thinks about it, with a long anecdote involving Marvin Gaye, the gist of which is that the soul legend once told an acquaintance of Lawless that every artist should "make the record that reflects who they are at that moment in their life". "That was one of the things that was imprinted on me with a branding iron," Lawless says eventually. "Be who you are at that moment."

What Blackie Lawless or Marvin Gaye didn't know was just how notorious *Animal (Fuck Like A Beast)* and their stage show would make WASP. That became apparent when the band arrived in London in September 1984 for their first UK tour.

"We land at the airport and there's all kinds of press people there to meet us," Lawless recalls "We didn't know what was happening. So we pile in the cars and drive off. We stopped at a light, and I look over and see a newsstand, and there are these big headlines: 'American Sex And Blood Rock Group Banned In Ireland'. I looked over at Chris and I go: 'Son of a bitch, some band has come over here and stolen our thunder.' Then we get to the hotel, and guess what…"

The puritans of Britain hadn't taken well to the idea of these liver-tossing, woman-torturing rock monsters arriving on their shores. An issue of *Kerrang!* magazine featuring a blood-drenched Blackie on the cover was pulled from the racks of newsagents WHSmith. A show in Ireland was cancelled. The band were allegedly forced to sign contracts guaranteeing they wouldn't release rats on stage. Even then, the shows that did happen were picketed by religious groups.

"A vicar and his congregation would follow us around. They'd stand in the back praying the whole time."

"There was a vicar and his congregation who would follow us around to every show we did in the UK," says Lawless. "These people would buy tickets and come into the show, and they'd stand in the back praying the whole time."

It was weird and funny at the time. But back home in America things were about to get a lot weirder and a damn sight less funny.

Elizabeth 'Tipper' Gore was the wife of rising US Senator and future Presidential Candidate Al Gore. She had founded pro-censorship group the Parental Music Resource Center (PMRC) with a group of other so-called 'Washington Wives', who drew up a list of 'obscene' songs they called The Filthy Fifteen. And in with a bullet at number nine was *Animal (Fuck Like A Beast).*

Being a public enemy had its upsides – Lawless got to know Frank Zappa, who became a self-appointed human shield for the bands on the PMRC's shitlist – but mostly it made life harder for WASP. "It started getting ugly," Lawless says.

Their next two albums – 1985's glorious *The Last Command* and 1987's *Inside The Electric Circus* – carried the momentum, but the band were under siege from the moral majority. They ditched most of the OTT on-stage visuals after their first album, but the swivel-eyed Christian right continued to picket their shows. Venues received bomb threats and gigs were cancelled. Lawless says he personally got "more than a thousand death threats in the post". There was the incident with his sabotaged car, which could have killed him, and he claims he was shot at on more than one occasion.

To this day, he insists the PMRC was set up as a political machine to raise the profile of Tipper's husband Al Gore. "What better way to get attention for themselves than to go after an attention-getter?" he says.

Lawless never did meet Tipper Gore, although he came close. In 1987, film-maker Penelope Spheeris arranged to get the two of them in a room together for a scene in her new film *The Decline Of Western Civilisation Part II: The Metal Years.* The day before filming, Spheeris called Lawless to tell him Gore had pulled out.

"She goes: 'If you can't think of anything else, do you mind if I interview Chris Holmes instead?'" says Lawless. He ran the idea past his manager, Rod Smallwood. "He goes: 'What do you think?' And I shrugged my shoulders and said: 'How bad can it be?'"

Pretty bad, it turned out, at least for one person. The barely coherent Holmes wasn't just drunk in the film, he was knocking back vodka from the bottle. While laying on a lilo in a swimming pool. With his mother looking on disapprovingly. To most people it was comedy gold. Not Lawless.

"No, no," he says, sounding exasperated even all these years later. "We were just getting ready to release *The Headless Children*. I've made this big political statement, I'm trying to do something socially relevant, and I got a guitar player who can barely put two sentences together. Was that the message I wanted to put out?"

Chris Holmes getting trolleyed on a lilo in front of his mum didn't hole WASP's career. *The Headless Children*, released in 1989, was their best and boldest album yet. The only shocking thing about it was how grown up these former enfants terrible had become. The guy who screeched *'I got pictures of naked ladies lying on their beds'* like a horny teenager on *Animal* was now singing about the threat of nuclear war and the misery of heroin addiction, and covering The Who and Jethro Tull.

"We separated ourselves from everything else that was going on, especially in LA," Lawless says now. "We cut and ran and we never looked back. And that saved us."

The Headless Children would be

Early WASP gigs made Alice Cooper's show look like a pre-teens panto.

TOP: © COPYRIGHT SPHEERIS FILMS, INC; BOTTOM: PG BRUNELLI/ICONICPIX

WASP's high-water mark. The follow-up, 1992's *The Crimson Idol*, was a full-blown rock opera – Lawless's own version of *Tommy* or *The Wall*, except without the sales. Or the band members – it was a Blackie Lawless solo album in all but name after Chris Holmes quit to spend time with his wife, former Runaways guitarist-turned-solo star Lita Ford.

WASP's 1990s followed exactly the same path as that of most of their contemporaries, in that it was tough. They made some good albums along the way (1999's *Helldorado*) and the odd dud (1995's wrong-headed industrial-metal turkey *Kill.Fuck. Die*), but the band had lost their sting.

"It was rough, I'm not gonna lie," Lawless says of that blighted decade. "There were times when we didn't know if we'd make it to the end of the decade. If we hadn't separated ourselves from those other bands we'd been lumped in with we would have died. We survived, but survival and flourishing are two different things."

Lawless was too stubborn to quit, and WASP ploughed on through it all, right up to today. There was no big commercial turnaround, no overnight resurrection, no sudden realisation that, actually, Blackie Lawless knows how to knock out a brilliant tune and all the other stuff just got in the way. Instead they carried on releasing consistently great albums to a reduced but loyal audience.

Along the way something unexpected and, given his past run-ins with irate vicars, ironic happened to Lawless: he found God. More accurately, he rediscovered God. He'd been raised in a staunchly religious house, but left the church as a disenfranchised 18-year-old. In 2005 his dormant faith began to awake.

There was no tipping point for his prodigal-son return. "It didn't happen overnight, it was a slow, gradual process," he says. Even now, he has little time for organised religion. "My faith centres on Jesus Christ and the Bible and nothing else."

After his spiritual reawakening, WASP stopped playing *Animal (Fuck Like A Beast)*. Lawless quoted a verse from the Bible to back up his decision: "Let no corrupt speech come from your mouth."

WASP are due to embark on a tour to mark their 40th anniversary a few weeks after we speak. The set will be packed with their best-known songs from their 80s heyday, though the question of whether their most notorious track will be among them remains to be seen. Blackie Lawless might just be mellowing on that front now. He's at least thinking about it.

"You can't erase those records, and I think I have an obligation to satisfy some people," he says, evasively. In the end, the choice is taken out of his hands, at least temporarily. Covid means the anniversary tour is postponed (with UK dates rescheduled for March 2023), giving him a few extra months to judge whether it's worth the cost to his immortal soul.

The fact that a song he wrote 40 years ago is still a point of contention is kind of remarkable. WASP wouldn't be the band they are without *Animal*. But they might have been a completely different band, recognised not for shock tactics but for the greatness of their music.

"Did the controversy overshadow everything else?" says Blackie Lawless. "Yeah, maybe it did in the beginning, but it got us noticed. Would I change anything? No. Because when it comes down to it, everything is out of your control." ●

NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM

INSIDE THE ELECTRIC CIRCUS

From shock tactics to hard-rock hymnals, here's the best of four decades of WASP and Blackie Lawless.

ANIMAL (FUCK LIKE A BEAST) (1984)

The track that kicked it all off, a sweaty, sticky, just-the-right-side-of-dubious 80s shock-rock classic. Despite that provocative subtitle, Lawless only drops the F-bomb twice in the whole song.

I WANNA BE SOMEBODY (1984)

An exhilarating drum barrage introduces the track that kicks off WASP's debut album. *'I wanna be somebody, be somebody soon,'* Lawless rasps, like the world's most unlikely self-help guru.

BLIND IN TEXAS (1985)

On second album *The Last Command* the rough edges were smoothed out, although the fuck-you attitude remained. This uproarious pub crawl around the Lone Star State found our hero getting into it with a bunch of good ol' boys who presumably didn't very much like men whose arses hung out of their Spandex.

WIDOW MAKER (1985)

WASP turn up the menace on this striking second-album deep cut: a lone bass rumbles, drums roll like thunderheads, and Lawless plays the part of a vengeful God-spirit wandering roaming desolate plains.

INSIDE THE ELECTRIC CIRCUS (1987)

The controversy was taking its toll by the time of WASP's third album, but *Inside The Electric Circus*'s title track remains a classic, with Lawless the ringmaster beckoning the innocent into his weird world with a wicked gleam in his eye.

THE HERETIC (THE LOST CHILD) (1989)

The Headless Children found Lawless largely ditching the dumb-ass hard rock shtick and locating his social conscience. The majestic opening track is urgent and surprising, showing what a tremendous songwriter he really is.

THE REAL ME (1989)

Fans of The Who baulked at a bunch of LA longhairs hijacking this *Quadrophenia* classic, but Pete Townshend devotee Lawless brought some hard-rock energy to its tale of teenage angst and mental illness.

THE IDOL (1992)

Speaking of The Who, 1992's *The Crimson Idol* was Lawless's attempt to deliver his own *Tommy*. He didn't quite pull it off, but the epic eight-minute semi-title track shows just how close he got.

TAKE ME UP (2007)

Every WASP record of the past 20 years contains least one late-period classic. In the case of their thirteenth studio album, 2007's mis-titled *Dominator* it was *Take Me Up*, a billowing anthem that found Lawless at his most plaintive.

MISS YOU (2015)

Babylon (2009) and *Golgotha* (2015) were the work of a born-again Blackie Lawless in every sense. Thankfully there was little proselytising, but there were some moments of honest-to-god brilliance, not least this seven-minute hard-rock hymnal that explored personal loss and regained faith.

MOONAGE DAYDREAMERS

With their sparkling alt.rock and lascivious androgyny, **Placebo** aimed high and set the 90s alight – and got the nod from Bowie. "All I wanted was never to have to get a real job," says frontman Brian Molko.

Words: **Emma Johnston**

"What would David Bowie do?" It's a question Placebo frontman Brian Molko asks himself on a regular basis when his patience is being tried. The great man was one of the band's most vocal supporters (along with The Cure's Robert Smith and R.E.M's Michael Stipe) from the earliest days, when Placebo invaded London's lager-soaked mid-90s rock scene in a starburst of exquisite androgyny, armed with a set of alt.rock anthems that combined a gothic edge with a joyous, riotous sense of mischief. They sounded, looked and acted like absolutely no one else. Which was why Bowie invited them to perform their song *Without You I'm Nothing* with him at his 50th birthday bash at Madison Square Garden in New York City – a moment that remains a high point of Placebo's career, and one that Molko still treasures a quarter of a century later.

"I was kind of like: 'Yeah, this is where I'm supposed to be, man,'" he reminisces today, in Bilbao, Spain where he's enjoying a day off during a tour that will continue to the end of the year. "I didn't really understand the weight and the significance of it. David taught me more about what it meant to be a good human being than he taught me how to be a good musician. He treated everyone that he came into contact with – it didn't matter what their perceived status was – with respect and humanity. It took a long time, unfortunately, for me to understand that, because I was wrapped up in the idea of how cool I was. It took David passing for me to really understand that human impact, how significant it was for me. Sometimes I ask myself: 'What would David do in this situation?'"

> **"We could be anybody we wanted to be, musically. To have that freedom, it's quite wonderful."**
>
> **Brian Molko**

It's nine years since Placebo's last album, *Loud Like Love*, and Molko and bassist Stefan Olsdal are finally back, with *Never Let Me Go*. The long gap between records was down to a best-of album and tour enforced by their then-label ("It wasn't the most fantastic experience for us," says Molko. "It felt kind of overly self-congratulatory. It reeked of consumerism") followed by the world shutting down during the pandemic.

The wait was well worth it. *Never Let Me Go* is the sound of a band fired up and looking forward, rather than resting on past glories. Wide ranging, from soaring pop-rock to industrial beats, it was done backwards, starting with a decision on the album cover, followed by the song titles, then the music and lyrics written around them.

"I have such a low boredom threshold," says Molko. "I was very afraid that I would get bored with the process, and the process is more important to me than the result. It was interesting for us, because we found ourselves, myself and Stefan, for the first time in twenty-five years, just the two of us in a room, very much like the mid-nineties, when we started demoing the first album. At that point we understood that the possibilities were infinite, and that we had an opportunity to redefine who we were, to make a statement about where we wanted to go in the future and move far away from the dreaded idea of becoming a heritage band of some kind. We could be anybody that we wanted to be, musically. To have that freedom, it's quite wonderful."

That bond with Olsdal is key to Placebo's success. Drummers have come and gone over the years, but the pair have always been the driving force, the beating heart of the band. They attended the same international school in Luxembourg, but didn't meet until their paths crossed in London, after Molko had fled there at the age of 17 in order to study drama. Their shared education undoubtedly gave both men a European outlook – Olsdal is Swedish, Molko the Belgium-born son of an American father and Scottish mother – which can only have strengthened their later, long-lasting success across the globe.

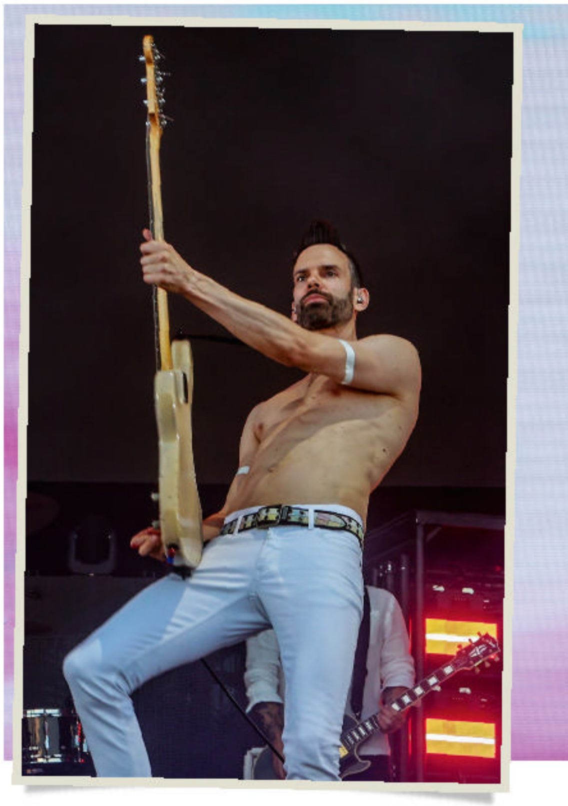
"When we get together, something magical happens," says Molko. "I think it's important not to question it, not to analyse it. I just know that we're better together."

A "studious but mischievous" child – something you can well believe, as to this day he possesses a giggle that single-handedly illustrates the entire concept of naughtiness – Molko grew up in a home where creative ambitions were actively discouraged. His expected future route, that of a wage slave, filled him with horror from an early age.

"All I wanted was never to have to get a real job," he says. "I looked at my father when I was eleven, and I went:

MADS PERCH/PRESS

No smoke without plenty of fire: 90s Brian Molko.



"There were a few run-ins with Limp Bizkit, with Kid Rock, with people like that… There was a lot of aggression coming our way." Brian Molko

'You go to the same place in that monkey suit every day?' And he went, 'Yeah, and so will you.' And at that point I thought no, I'm just gonna have to find another way. People I went to school with, kids my age, they went straight from school to the office, and they went really grey, really quickly. It takes courage, determination and perseverance to forge your own path. In my case it was just an absolute necessity. I had no choice."

There was certainly little in the way of fitting in meekly and greyly when Placebo started to gain traction. From the first time they performed their breakthrough hit *Nancy Boy* – a gloriously spiky, magnificently queer alt.rock anthem – on *Top Of The Pops*, they provided immediate refuge to a generation of kids who felt like outsiders.

"We thought we were freaks compared to the mainstream," Molko says. "We were amazed to find ourselves where we were at the time of our first record. It all happened very quickly. So I guess there was a need for a band like us, but we didn't strategise."

It was an electrifying cultural moment in a sea of Britpop terrace swagger. Molko, it was immediately apparent, was the rock star for his era. Small, impish and quick-witted, anchored by the steadying, physically gigantic presence of Olsdal, they wielded their talent and their sexuality – Olsdal is gay, Molko bisexual – like a mace. They were the spirit of punk rock infused with grace and glamour. Their impact wasn't just thrilling, it was also essential for their fans.

But quickly earned success did not equal acceptance. Tiresome homophobia being what it is, Molko soon started arriving home to his council flat to find death threats on his answering machine. Uncowed, the band simply doubled down and included the messages on their second album, *Without You I'm Nothing*.

"There was something about the antagonism which we enjoyed," he admits. "Once we understood what it was, there was a political aspect to it. But it took us a few years to understand what was happening and why people were getting so upset. And then once we did, we understood the method was to do it more, if we felt like it."

The indie scene was a walk in the park, though, compared to the next big wave to hit the charts: nu metal. Placebo themselves found the whole genre hilarious, and were more than happy to once again stay on the outside. With touring life being a tiny ecosystem that crosses paths with itself on a regular basis, they did, however, find themselves sharing festival bills with an assortment of loudmouthed, willfully stupid knuckleheads. As ever, they gave as good as they got, with a wink and a gleam in the eye that can only have further enraged America's most charmless Neanderthals even more.

"Nu metal was particularly homophobic," Molko explains. "There were a few run-ins with Limp Bizkit, with Kid Rock, with people like that. We would end up on the same bill, and there was a lot of aggression coming our way. But we were very energetic and combative."

Still, despite having to fight his corner like a terrier in mascara, fame came quickly and abundantly, and Molko embraced it with ravenous glee. The attention, the constant whirl of

Brian Molko and (inset) Stefan Olsdal at the 2022 Mad Cool festival in Madrid in July.

rock'n'roll debauchery, he lapped it all up, and soon he was known throughout London for being the life and soul of every party going. "I loved it," he says. "I absolutely adored it. I was a kid in a candy shop. Everything I didn't have when I was growing up was just right in front of me. I had a belated adolescence that's kind of still going on to this day."

But for every high, there has to come a crashing low. And in his late twenties, just as Placebo really hit their stride creatively, their frontman was diagnosed with depression. Suddenly a lot of things started to make more sense.

"A lot of my lifestyle was a coping mechanism," he says. "And to be honest, looking back, I wouldn't really have wanted it any different. I was fortunate enough to have a context from which to kind of begin to understand what was going on inside of me. I think songs show you what your emotional landscape is. But despite my challenges I appear to have achieved quite a bit. Hopefully that's inspiring to others."

Addiction was all part of the chaos back then, too. It's not something Molko likes to talk about publicly, but he does say that he regrets not being quite as "in the room" as he could have been during the 90s. Throughout the past decade, he's worked hard to try and get his life on an even keel – he's currently rereading the renowned self-help book *The Four Agreements*, and has become a student of Buddhism.

"I am grateful for my drug addiction and alcoholism," he says via email a couple of days after our conversation, having given the subject some thought. "Without them I would never have done twelve years of therapy, I'd never have become interested in meditation and Buddhism, *The Four Agreements*, Krishnamurti. There would have been no spiritual dimension to my life. I'd have been like most people – walking around like fucking zombies, buying shit I don't need and contaminating. I have an inner world now. I go where I choose now. Getting here was painful and remains traumatic, but I cannot help but be grateful for it. I am today a person I almost like."

That's good to hear, because Brian Molko is an extremely likable person. He's an interviewer's dream – at once funny, cheeky, fearlessly honest, complex, intelligent, self-deprecating and confident. He recently started a new life on the European mainland, dismayed by Brexit and feeling pushed out of his adopted home in the UK, but is looking to the future, striving for excellence at the band's ongoing live shows. And while lockdown was tricky – he barely picked up a guitar during those months, paralysed by the "real, deep, existential uncertainty of it all" – the new album signals a rebirth and a new chapter. Molko's 17-year-old son, Cody, a musician and actor, makes an appearance on the track *Try Better Next Time*, and was encouraged from a young age to follow his own path in a way his father was not.

"I had a belated adolescence that's kind of still going on to this day."
Brian Molko

"It was joyful," he says of the session for the track. "I guess when we're both gone we'll still exist somewhere. That's kind of cool. I just remember saying to him when he was very, very young, whatever you decide to do, just choose to do what makes you happy. I think that's kind of excellent advice for parents to give their children."

Rock'n'roll needs a band like Placebo, arguably now more than ever. In a world of conformity they're a beacon of individuality, of taking the inevitable challenges of modern times and turning them into life-affirming art. David Bowie was right. David Bowie was *always* right. ●

Placebo tour the UK in November and December.

GETTY x2

SIX PACK

New to Placebo, or just need a refresher? These are the tracks you need to hear.

NANCY BOY

The one that started it all, *Nancy Boy* screams rock'n'roll and hormones with unabashed glee. Molko admits he was going for shock value, his protagonist on a wild rampage through the city, losing his lube along the way.

WITHOUT YOU I'M NOTHING

The title track from the album on which Placebo truly flew for the first time is a perfect combination of gritty guitars, sweet vocals and an atmosphere of pure forboding. One of the highlights of their career, and – yes! – Bowie even lent his vocals to the remixed single version.

MY SWEET PRINCE

Beautiful and deeply disturbing, there's a drugged-out sadness and heartbreaking euphoria in every fibre of this elegant, piano-strewn ballad, written from a fog of bad decisions.

THE BITTER END

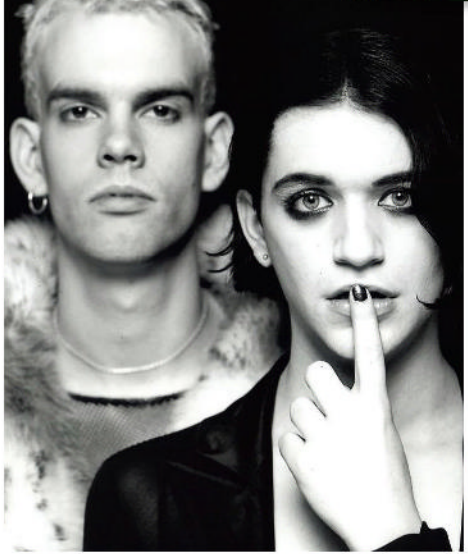
A longtime live favourite, this rollicking and breathless cut from *Sleeping With Ghosts* was inspired by George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

SONG TO SAY GOODBYE

Opening lyrics don't come much more vicious than '*You are one of God's mistakes, you crying, tragic waste of skin.*' The Cure's influence shines in the bass line on this slice of absolute fury.

BEAUTIFUL JAMES

Synth-smothered and air-punch-worthy, this high point from the new album reminds its creator of Van Halen. "Maybe this is going to be our *Jump*," says Molko.



ROBBY KLEIN/PRESS

There's no avoiding it: September is well and truly under way; holiday season is drawing to a close; the kids are back at school; hot, sweaty days are giving way to touches of autumnal chill, and it's getting dark earlier. Some may mourn these changes, these little endings. Others… well, others see opportunity. Because in so many ways autumn is a great time for a lot of us; a soul-cooling period of fresh starts, new projects and new music, as bands and artists peel off their summer festival passes and release new albums, EPs and singles and gear up for the winter gig season. It's a time of creative plenty. A time to reset.

All of this gleams through this month's Hot List, which takes in blues rock, glossy-maned AOR, dreamy psych rock/pop and much more, from brand new, rising and returning names alike. More of the best new music, from new and established bands (mostly new), can be found via *Classic Rock*'s Tracks Of The Week over at classicrockmagazine.com, where you can also vote for your favourite.

But first here's this little lot.

Tyler Bryant & The Shakedown

Ain't None Watered Down

This first taste of the TB&TS's new album is a rollin', rootsy co-write by Bryant and wife his Rebecca Lovell (she of Larkin Poe fame). As he explains, it set the tone for what was to come – i.e. a return to their bluesy roots. "When Caleb, Graham and I started talking about what we wanted to do next, we kept kicking around the idea of getting back to our initial roots as a band," Bryant says. "So much of that was steeped in low-down blues and rock'n'roll. One morning I was kicking around a little song idea with my wife, and *Ain't None Watered Down* was born. Everything fell into place so naturally."

tylerbryantandtheshakedown.com

Thorbjørn Risager & The Black Tornado

Fire Inside

These Danish rockers pay homage to ZZ Top, their favourite band, on this rough-throated, bright-eyed bluesy strutter. Spiced with select brass blasts and wah-wah guitar chops, it's an enriched take on Billy Gibbons and co's unmistakable sound, and a thoroughly enjoyable one; all aviators and beard – with a lick of beard oil. As they explain: "I can't tell how many times we've ended up in a very loud hotel room after-party after a concert with ZZ Top's *Tres Hombres* on volume eleven and a bunch of cold beers."

Not a bad starting point, we'll give 'em that. Check out this track and more on their new album *Navigation Blues*, released on September 30.

risager.info

THORBJØRN RISAGER & THE BLACK TORNADO: CHRISTOFFER ASKMAN/PRESS

Laurence Jones *Anywhere With Me*

The blues boy hath become a rock man, as our favourite track from his new album *Destination Unknown* shows. True, the blues isn't exactly off the table – the 12-bar chorus going on here reflects that – but loose-limbed rock'n'roll takes a decidedly more prominent seat, lending some classic snap and swagger to Jones's delivery. Plus at this point the guy has been playing guitar since childhood, Bonamassa-style, and it shows in the ease with which he delivers his chops and licks.

laurencejonesmusic.com

Lissie *Sad*

If Stevie Nicks raised a child with Amanda Shires, it might have been Lissie – a Midwesterner with her heart in Nashville and an ear for tender indie/Americana tones, as the emotive, soaring *Sad* reflects. "*Sad* is about being in the thick of anger over someone hurting you," she says. "Of wanting them to feel remorse for what they did, along with some self-awareness that while forgiveness is on the horizon, they need to feel the effects of their actions." Lissie comes to the UK for in-store appearances this month and in October.

lissie.com

Chez Kane

I Just Want You

There's something wrong-yet-right about this one. If you thought H.e.a.t didn't take the whole 80s AOR nostalgia thing far enough, Welsh singer Chez Kane just might be for you. Produced and co-masterminded by Crazy Lixx's Danny Rexon, it's a bit like hearing Heart's *Alone* mashed up with the *Flashdance* score, with Bon Jovi's stylist on speed dial. Her next album, *Powerzone* (although it might as well be called *Dangerzone*, it's that in thrall to the decade) is out on October 21.
chezkane.com

Gift

Gumball Garden

Don't be fooled by the lo-fi opening chords, or the whimsical, *Alice In Wonderland*-y title, *Gumball Garden* has plenty of chew to get your teeth into. It's the gauzy yet super-hooky brainchild of young Brooklyn psych-rock quintet Gift, a band with shoegaze at their fingertips, early Pond and Tame Impala in their heads, and hallucinogens in their drinks… Or something like that, if these invitingly head-spinning tones are anything to go by. Kaleidoscopic, dreamy, and it really rocks? Sign us up. There's more where this came from on their debut album *Momentary Presence*, out on October 14.
gift-music.com

CHEZ KANE: DANNY REXON/PRESS. GIFT: JENA CUMBO/PRESS

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The Pinx

You're Not The One

You might not know the name, but this Atlanta, Georgia quartet have shared stages with Dick Dale, Nashville Pussy, Blue Öyster Cult, The Sonics, Wayne Kramer and MC50, among others. Based on The Pinx's deliciously grizzled, garage-fresh marriage of treacly psychedelia and southern heat, all stirred into a super-catchy song, it's not hard to see the appeal.

Find this track and more on their self-titled fourth album, produced by Tom Tapley (Mastodon, Blackberry Smoke), which is out now.

thepinxrock.com

PINX: SARAH COFER/PRESS

The Hunna

Trash

It's been said before, it'll be said again, and we're saying it now: sometimes keeping it simple pays off in truckloads.

British trio The Hunna prove this with *Trash*. Built on a no-flab, all-beef hook, it's all unfettered, ah-fuck-it punk oomph with Beastie Boys lip, as they sing the chorus '*all they want is fucking money, money!*' like a bunch of feral youths diving into the biscuit tin, opening all the presents and turning the stereo all the way up.

"We had so much fun writing the lyrics," says vocalist/guitarist Ryan Potter. "Even though it has got an angst to it, we don't take life too seriously, we're just having fun. We're not calling anyone specific out, it's just overall industry suckiness."

thehunnaofficial.com

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The Hard Stuff
The Ultimate Rock Reviews Section

18 PAGES · 100% ROCK

Classic Rock Ratings

- A Classic
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Above Average
- Average
- Below Par
- A Disappointment
- Pants
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Skid Row

With a new singer, the 80s hair-metallers make a remarkable comeback.

CHUCK ARLUND/PRESS

THE HARD STUFF

ALBUMS

The Cult

Under The Midnight Sun *BLACK HILL*

British rock grandees deliver late-career gem with studio album number 11.

The Cult have always been defined by the push-pull relationship between singer Ian Astbury and guitarist Billy Duffy. The former is one of rock's great poet-warriors, a restless shaman impervious to ridicule; the latter is a grafter, someone who relishes what he calls "cheesy popularity" of the kind his bandmate rails against. It's a combination that shouldn't work, and frequently hasn't, but when it does, magic happens.

The magic is definitely happening on *Under The Midnight Sun*, which is no small feat 40 years and 11 albums into a band's career. Where their two most recent albums – 2012's *Choice Of Weapon* and 2016's *Hidden* – made slightly heavy weather of the job of being The Cult, here they sound more reinvigorated than they have in decades.

The album sounds like the work of two men who have hit a period of being completely in sync. The electronic throb of *Vendetta X* calls back to the Astbury-led dancefloor-grunge experiments of 1994's self-titled album, but Duffy's arcing guitar connects it to rock's heartland. The guitarist is on stellar form throughout here, dialling back the unnecessary heroics in favour of colour and texture. He brings *Kashmir*-esque grandeur to *Knife Through Butterfly Heart*, and evokes memories of the band's distant goth past via the spidery guitar lines on *Impermanence*.

There are moments here that are as good as anything The Cult recorded back in their 80s heyday, not least the pulsing *Outer Heaven*, which finds Astbury exhorting us to *'embrace the outer heavens'* as strings swirl around him. Towards the end, it shifts gear into an epic run-out. *'As all light fades, we have to go,'* repeats Astbury, a sun mantra that brings the track to a hypnotic close.

It helps that *Under The Midnight Sun* comprises a lean eight tracks (something more bands should take note of). And new producer Tom Dalgety has given it the same crisp, clear punchiness he brought to past clients Royal Blood and Ghost. But this is a good record mostly because the two men at the heart of it all sound like they're actually enjoying being The Cult again. *'All will fade in time,'* Astbury sings on the smouldering title track, amid surprisingly low-key strings. One day they will too. But *Under The Midnight Sun* suggests that won't be for a while yet.

Dave Everley

Kid Kapichi

Here's What You Could Have Won *SPINEFARM*

Potent rants from Hastings' four angriest young men.

For their second album, Kid Kapichi have enlisted Dom Craik from Nothing But Thieves as co-producer. He celebrated by punching the guitars of Ben Beetham and singer Jack Wilson through what sounds like a meat grinder to deliver a 'beat punk' quasi-industrial update of The Damned's three-minute punk template. On top, Wilson delivers lyrics with socially conscious humour akin to Jarvis Cocker, snarling like a latter-day Johnny Rotten.

In short – as buzzsaw opener *New England* makes clear – Kid Kapichi see Britain going to hell in a handcart and are pretty bloody cross about it. *Rob The Supermarket* rails against poverty, *5 Days On (2 Days Off)* attacks waged slavery, while *Super Soaker* just rocks. They have softer moments, such as the acoustic *Party At No.10* eviscerating you know who, or the lovelorn *Never Really Had You*, but more typical is *Smash The Gaff*, which takes a baseball bat to the family china.

Rude and recommended.

Neil Jeffries

Red Hot Chili Peppers

Return Of The Dream Canteen *WARNERS*

On a hot streak with second album in six months.

After releasing April's 73-minute *Unlimited Love*, most bands would have left it at that for 2022. As we know, Red Hot Chili Peppers are not most bands. So although they usually take half a decade to recharge, they're on such a creative roll that it's two in a year.

Producer Rick Rubin's unerring capacity to tap each member's strengths remains undimmed, whether it's Anthony Kiedis tongue-twisting his way through *Fake As Fuck*, guitarist John Frusciante's wonderful weirdness on *Tippa My Tongue*, Chad Smith pounding through the appositely titled *The Drummer*, or bassist Flea being at his slinkiest in decades. The band even step into hitherto unvisited territories: *In The Snow* opens like Ultravox's *Vienna*, the twinkling *Shoot Me A Smile* takes its cue from The Kinks at their most winsome in the verses, then adds a chorus not a million miles from *Californication*, before sneaking in a subtle Krautrock undertow as Kiedis declares *'I remember The Clash'*.

A fine album by any standards, not least the Chili Peppers' own.

John Aizlewood

The Rasmus

Rise *PLAYGROUND MUSIC*

Tenth album from metallic Finnish Eurovision also-rans.

It's hard to fault The Rasmus on their own terms – *Rise* is akin to a properly functioning dry-ice machine. It features *Jezebel*, which finished an unjust 21st in the 2022 Eurovision Song Contest and makes sense in that context. This is music that should be played out to a giant hall of cheering fans waving the flags of Europe, with Graham Norton muttering wry noises of appreciation. In other contexts, it jars like a hotel guest arriving for breakfast in a gold lamé suit.

Tracks like *Be Somebody* are big, galvanising, tidal, just not very subtle or organic. There are moments of nuance, as in the opening of *Endless Horizon*, but this is almost immediately drowned by a tsunami of processed guitar. The album is conceived as a fightback against covid, and certainly beats wearing a mask on a crowded train, but its single setting of defiant cheer can jar.

David Stubbs

Asylums

Signs Of Life *COOL THING*

Southend quartet's hook-heavy fourth album.

There's a strong sense that Essex four-piece Asylums are pulling out all the stops on this album, drawing together everything they've learned from their eight years as a band. They're also not mucking about on the production side, bringing in Dave Eringa and working at Rockfield studios to give *Signs Of Life* a radio-friendly punch.

All of which would count for little if they hadn't also brought their songwriting 'A' game. You simply cannot argue with the one-two combination of the opening two tracks, with *Scatterbrain*'s thrillingly propulsive riff making it one of

TIM CADIENTE/PRESS

the indie-rock bangers of the year, and the ringing guitar that blazes a sky trail across *Understand The Psychology* lifting an effusive slice of melodic rock in a way instantly redolent of Ash at their most joyous.

At times they try a little too hard, as with the late Britpop-style strings on *Instant Coffee*, but even when on *Erase The Edges* they venture into dreamy ballad territory the tune is so insidious that resistance is futile.

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Johnny Sharp

Slipknot

The End, So Far ROADRUNNER

Iowa's masked machine get freaky on album seven.

We Are Not Your Kind reset the bar for Slipknot albums, returning to the sheer intensity of their first two records to re-establish them as an 18-legged maelstrom of nihilism and fury. *The End, So Far* is a near-complete inverse of that, embracing their most experimental tendencies. There are apoplectic ragers (*Hivemind, Warranty, H377*), melodious anthems (*Yen, Medicine For The Dead, Acidic, Finale*) and even nu-metal revivalism (*The Chapeltown Rag*), yet the album remains cohesive throughout.

Symphonies, angelic choirs, an opener that has overtones of *Kid A*-era Radiohead; it challenges expectations for Slipknot albums in 2022 while not losing any of the creative fire that made its predecessor so great.

The End, So Far feels like the fullest expression of what the nine are capable of since 2004's *Vol. 3*. It's the sound of a band returning to the apex of their creative potency.

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Rich Hobson

Afghan Whigs

How Do You Burn? BMG

Dulli's dark destroyers glower as gigantically as ever.

Drawing on blaxploitation funk, Stax soul, psychedelic rock and brimstone gospel throughout a career rich in James Ellroy-style crime-noir imagery, Greg Dulli's re-formed Afghan Whigs were never going to sound stuck in any 90s-revivalist rut.

This third album since their 2011 reunion – named by the late Mark Lanegan, who contributed backing vocals – broods and bristles like the height (or should that be depth?) of their first-era success; there's nothing over-the-hill about the piledriving motoric sex-rock of opener *I'll Make You See God* or the menacing, bulked-out *Dear Prudence* that is *The Getaway*. There are surprising touches, though: *Catch A Colt* comes on like a crueller clatter-rock Kasabian; *Jyja* and *Take Me There* build on seditious Eastern drones, and *A Line Of Shots* could be Elbow throwing the curtain wide then jumping off the ledge euphorically. While we might predict glowering organ, piano or acoustic guitar pieces, we might not expect them to get attacked by electronic wasps, as on *Concealer*.

How does it burn? Darkly, but with sparks.

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Mark Beaumont

Virgil And Steve Howe

Lunar Mist INSIDEOUT

Yes guitarist presents a fresh set of instrumentals written by his late son.

A talented drummer, keyboard player and composer, Virgil Howe died aged just 41 in 2017, just months ahead of the release of *Nexus*, the instrumental debut album he made with his father, Yes guitar great Steve. In 2020 Howe Snr. began hunting down as much of his son's material as he could find – ideas, demos, all-but-completed pieces – and developed these into this beautifully produced, lovingly rendered follow-up.

The otherworldly title track was completed before Virgil's death, and shows the proggy, spacey tone the pair excelled at. Throughout, Steve adds characteristically tasteful, world-class guitar – tender acoustic (on the romantic *More Than You Know* and melancholy *Never Less*) and lyrical electric (the hypnotically languid *Dirama* and funky, angular *Martian Mood*). Above all, as with its predecessor, *Lunar Mist* showcases Virgil's involving, inventive compositional skill and striking piano/synth playing, notably the exotically melodic *Mariah's Theme* and the moody *Lothian's Way*.

A bittersweet yet highly satisfying odyssey.

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Grant Moon

Nightblade

Hope To Be There SELF-RELEASED

Kidderminster band turn up 'blunt' beyond belief.

This is Nightblade's third album in as many years. And while less is sometimes more, here more is bloody painful. The band's endeavour is clear, but *Hope To Be There* comprises a bemusing set of songs. Their meat-and-potatoes rock sounds like a honky-tonk Iron Maiden wearing flannel shirts. Lacking the finesse to pull off a convincing epic, the near-eight-minute *Something Inside* is an ill-advised slog. On *If Only You Could Know*, the lead guitar parts seem out of time, while they're similarly sloppy on *No One Is To Blame*. It's effectively the sound of a cover band stumbling through their own demos for the first time. And for more than an hour.

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Chris Lord

The Dead Daisies

Radiance SPV

Glenn and co shine bright with more hefty, sun-soaked rock.

It's a contender for Worst Album Cover Of The Year, but thankfully The Dead Daisies still sound inspired on sixth album *Radiance*, the follow-up to last year's impressive *Holy Ground*, and their second album with Glenn Hughes fronting the heavy rock collective.

Naturally, there are songs about alchemy, vibrations and the cosmos, man. Yet this one has something of a darker complexion than its predecessor. The uplifting *Face Your Fear* sways with sonic might. *Kiss The Sun* rumbles along with a bottom-heavy production to die for. Despite having had stints with Dio and Whitesnake, Doug Aldrich shows again that he's one of the most underrated guitarists on the planet. His riffs on the title track are gigantic, some of his solos are sensational.

Masterfully crafted, this is taut, vibrant rock that ticks every box.

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Chris Lord

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Son Little: mind-expanding stuff.

CYNTHIA PEREZ/PRESS

Son Little

Like Neptune ANTI

As if his glorious slipping of the blues genre's straitjacket wasn't brave enough, Son Little's latest album is also an excavation of some pretty heavy-duty personal trauma. Reading his childhood journals over lockdown, the man born Aaron Earl Livingston realised that his lifelong lurch between drink, drugs, depression and therapy was rooted in his sexual abuse at the age of five by a neighbour.

That trauma – and its closure – is a key strand of *Like Neptune*. So too is 70s-era Bowie and Little's self-confessed LSD habit, resulting in some correspondingly out-there material. *Drummer* is an accessible entry point to his head-space: irredeemably funky, with Coke bottle-sounding percussion, you might cast it as the traditional opener engineered to put more straight-laced listeners under his spell. From there, Little has our full attention, and forks hard left, whether that's the wonky electro-crunk of *6AM*, the jazzy hypnosis of *Playing Both Sides* or the title track's vintage soul (as imagined by a visiting alien).

Consider our minds expanded.

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Thorbjørn Risager & The Black Tornado

Navigation Blues

MASCOT/PROVOGUE

Respected across Europe, the Danes really should be in the very top tier of modern bluesers. *Navigation Blues* could – should – fix that, with the title track kicking off a collection that offers both moments of uncomplicated push/pull tooled for festivals and curios you'll want to absorb.

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Tommy McLain

I Ran Down Every Dream

YEP ROC

Swamp-rock talisman McLain hasn't recorded solo for some 40 years, and this album has the sense of a rush of long-incubated ideas. Contributions from Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe and Van Dyke Parks should garner the headlines needed to make the whole enterprise bankable, but it's McLain's show, with writing as young as yesterday.

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David Sinclair Four

Apropos Blues CRITICAL DISCS

A conversation with a reliably verbose Billy Gibbons gave Sinclair his album title, and it's an apt one, with the musician/journalist cocking an ear to the national mood and chronicling it in song. *Hip-Hopping*, decorated by rapper Johnny Cypher, is one of several laugh-a-minute romps, but there's perhaps a greater resonance to moments like the minor-key mortality treatise *Years Are Gone*.

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Bad Luck Friday

Bad Luck Friday WILDE FIRE

Black-clad, anvil-heavy and morose in photo-shoots, Bad Luck Friday could almost be an Alter Bridge substitute were it not for their USP: the roaring blues harp work of de facto leader Will Wilde. It's a trump card skilfully played, and lifts songs such as *666 At The Crossroads* and *Jealous Woman* to exciting places, and lends a suitably edgy shriek to *Banshee*.

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JENNY RISHER/PRESS

Skid Row

The Gang's All Here *THE SKIDS ARE ALRIGHT*

Faded-star hair-metallers return with their best album since their best-ever album.

Skid Row blew through town recently on one of those 80s-revival tours, headlining over Winger and Warrant, and I felt, like most people do in these circumstances, that the Skids deserve better. Sure, in their early days they scored big, lighter-waving, I-just-bought-my-first-mansion-in-cash glam-metal hits, but by their double-platinum ferocious second album, 1991's *Slave To The Grind*, they had settled into a pile-driving arena-thrash sound that was miles away from the hair-care bunch. Losing their Adonis frontman Sebastian Bach somewhere in the 90s was certainly a blow to their momentum, as was a spotty discography and a revolving door of singers. You can blame grunge too, if you want. But there is an alternative timeline out there where nobody blew it, where Skid Row soared through fallow times with thunder and grace, and that timeline would've also ended up with *The Gang's All Here*. Maybe in that one Bach would still be doing the throat-shedding screams, but *Swedish Idol* winner and former H.e.a.t man Erik Grönwall does such a phenomenal job filling those very large shoes that you hardly notice. He may not look the part, but he sure as fuck sounds like a six-foot, leather-lunged God Of Rock. That's the good news.

The better news is that this is easily the best Skid Row record since *Slave*. Opener *Hell Or High Water* is essentially a *Monkey Business* redux, all chuggy riffs and chest-thumping whoops. The real killer comes next, though. The title track is not only a grand declaration of good times in the classic *The Boys Are Back In Town* mould, it's also just a monster of a track, full of fire and spunk and fist-pumping energy that would've shaken arenas to pieces back in their heyday. And the album is packed with that kinda stuff. The magical mixture they've landed on here is mixing the sparkling pop hooks of their first album with the more rip-snorting metal of their follow-up. And while the album should all sound like some canned time capsule from the MTV era, instead it sounds fresh, invigorating and essential. Of course, it wouldn't be Skid Row without a power ballad, but thankfully, they leave the slow-dancer, *October's Song*, on the back end of the album. It's fine in a rainy, grunge-lite sorta way. But the bulk of the album is full-on, victory or death, maximum rock'n'roll.

A truly remarkable comeback. With any luck, after this album they'll never have to play with fucking Warrant ever again.

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Sleazegrinder

Clutch

Sunrise On Slaughter Beach *WEATHERMAKER*

Eloquent and amplified, the best Clutch album yet.

Latter-day Clutch are enjoying something of a creative purple patch – if you can call the past 10 years since *Earth Rocker* a patch. The sophistication and breadth of their songwriting has escalated to the point that each album is now an exercise in lyrical artistry with the kind of aural impact usually associated with a comet hitting the Earth.

Sunrise On Slaughter Beach saunters out of the gate like a book of notable American fiction orchestrated by Motörhead, Mastodon and John Lee Hooker. There's a remarkable sense of interplay, open space, hard rock and ambition that suggests most other bands might as well pack up their tents and think about heading home. It's hard to pick gems from a sea of diamonds, but tracks like the juddering *Slaughter Beach*, the roiling *Mountain Of Bone* or the shadowy menace of *Mercy Brown* will ring around your head long after the music's stopped.

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Philip Wilding

Loudness

Sunburst *EAR MUSIC*

Japanese metallers' expanded, uncompromising return.

Far from winding down the work rate as might befit men in their sixties, on their twenty-eighth studio album these Japanese metal legends appear to be stepping it up, with their first ever double album.

If you're hoping for surprises from *Sunburst*, then you're missing the point. A theme running through these tracks is paying homage to the band's roots, from songs such as *Shining '80s* to nods toward their native culture in *The Heart Of Japan*. And throughout, it's old-school metal like they've always made, full of pulverising high tempos, staccato power chords, ringing falsetto howls, squiddling guitar breaks and galloping, foot-on-monitors power. The approach works best when driven by the monster-trucking riff hooks of *Yamato Damashii* and *Emerald Ocean*.

No wheels were reinvented in the making of this album, but you feel that for a band who are still going strong after this long, business as usual suits everyone just fine.

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Johnny Sharp

Tony Wright

The Anti-Album *GRAPHITE*

Terrorvision frontman roams duskier, acoustic plains.

After re-recording a clutch of songs from 2018's band-backed second solo album *Walnut Dash* as acoustic numbers for last year's *The Lockdown Sessions*, Tony Wright must have liked how it sounded, because this third solo album of originals doubles down on the lonesome troubadour approach. And while it often sounds half wild west, half wild West Yorkshire, that curious combination frequently works.

The extra decorations he does apply to these tunes are often subtly effective, too: smooth country harmonies soften the fierce vitriol of *Buried You Deeper*; *Get It Wrong*, with its sparse, twanging riff, has Morricone-esque dramatic touches such as timpani, tinkling piano and chiming bells in the background as Wright sings: '*I believed I could tame the beast and I thought I could calm the storm but I'm wrong*. You get the feeling that if it was Nick Cave singing it, people would be falling over themselves in praise. Either way, *The Anti-Album* is a compelling left turn from an underrated songwriter.

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Johnny Sharp

Pixies

Doggerel *BMG*

Alt.rock legends return with more tales from the dark side.

If the weight of being one of the most influential American rock bands of all time ever burdens Pixies' shoulders, there's no sign of any pressure on *Doggerel*. While it would have been very easy for them to stuff their eighth album with knock-offs of *Where Is My Mind?* or *Debaser*, instead they have created a very different world for themselves, the punk shrieks of old mostly – bar a couple of yelps from Black Francis on *Get Simulated* – replaced with something more subtly malevolent.

Doggerel is an album of tendrils, stretching out from surf guitars and slinky bass lines, so that even its most classic, energetic rockers – *Nomatterday* and *There's A Moon On* – are infused with a beautiful sense of foreboding. The latter,

exploring the phases of the moon and the madness they inspire, is a perfect example of why Pixies still matter so much, as it – like the rest of the songs on here – is stuffed with vivid, folkloreish, often surreal lyrics that can be pored and puzzled over for infinity.

After all this time, Pixies can still surprise and intrigue.

Emma Johnston

Dr. John
Things Happen That Way
ROUNDER

The Doc still raves, from the grave.

Dr. John (aka Mac Rebennack) was working this material up when he died of a heart attack in June 2019, but there's no sign that this posthumous release is a salvage job. Country-styled with plenty of New Orleans flavouring, Mac tackles Willie Nelson's *Funny How Time Slips Away* (mangling the words but getting away with it) and tips his beret to Hank Williams (*I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry*). Nelson wanders in for *Gimme That Old Time Religion* (old timers both), while his son Lukas Nelson & Promise Of The Real modernise *I Walk On Guilded Splinters* with electronic mind-altering Mardi Gras jive. The new songs are the most reflective: *Holy Water* deals with Mac's addictions, while Give *Myself A Good Talkin' To* is sweetly confessional.

Dr. John sounds in tip-top form here. Sometimes it's the cure that kills yer.

Max Bell

The Godfathers
Alpha Beta Gamma Delta
GODFATHERS/CARGO

Reinvigorated rock'n'rollers make an offer you can't refuse.

Since wiping out the band's previous incarnation in a surprise dawn hit worthy of Michael Corleone Peter Coyne – The Godfathers' singer, sole constant member and capo tutti du capi – wasted little time in assembling a new line-up (guitarists Richie Simpson and Wayne Vermaark, drummer Billy Duncanson and bassist/producer Jon Priestley) to fulfil his original vision of making rock'n'roll that's "neat, hard and not at all watered down".

The jolt has certainly worked in Coyne's favour, and in the process The Godfathers have fashioned their best album since 1991's *Unreal World* to add to an already impressive legacy. Although the chill winds of mortality and contemplation blow through *There Is No Time*, *Bring On The Sunshine* and *I Hate The 21st Century*, these are far from maudlin meditations with one eye on life's finishing line. Indeed, through a combination of hard riffing, melodicism and Priestley's cranked-up production, The Godfathers deliver with a sincerity that's utterly palpable throughout. *Lay That Money Down* is terrific fun, while closer *I Despair* sums up the state of the nation.

Julian Marszalek

Nikki Lane
Denim And Diamonds
NEW WEST

Alive and kicking.

No sooner had Nikki Lane set up a suitable career path with 2017's *Highway Queen*, mixing her country-gal emotional songs with a sassy indie vibe, than she was off duetting with rude country comedian Ben Hoffman, aka Wheeler Walker Jr, on his song *Fucking Around*, admittedly disguising herself as 'Kacey Walker'. She then reverted to her own name to help out Lana Del Rey on her 2021 album *Chemtrails Over The Country Club*, as well as Australian alt.country singer Ruby Boots.

Now she's back, tracking down her youthful follies with a rockier edge supplied by producer Josh Homme and some of his Stone Age mates.

On *Denim And Diamonds*, *First High* and *Born Tough* seek out her adolescence, while the title track and *Black Widow* stress her continuing defiance. This girl is not just following the satnav. She's older, but wilfully no wiser.

Hugh Fielder

Built To Spill
When The Wind Forgets Your Name
SUB POP

Album number eight reveals indie rock with a heart of gold and charm to spare.

After 30 years at the helm of Built To Spill, sole permanent member Doug Martsch has finally made it to his spiritual home of Sub Pop, a label consistent in releasing quality records that don't quite fit in anywhere else.

It was a smart move for both parties, because *When The Wind Forgets Your Name* is a thoroughly charming experience. A collaboration with La Almeida and João Casaes, both of Brazilian jazzy psych-rockers Oruã, it could slot right into any of the past three decades, stuffed as it is with timeless slices of indie-rock suffused with just the right level of lo-fi social awkwardness. That's not to say the band are not stretching themselves. *Rocksteady* takes Martsch to pastures new, its loose, reggae-inspired groove moulded to perfectly cradle Built To Spill's sparse but beautiful, rough-and-ready blueprint. The end result is a sweet and thoughtful set from one of the genre's lifers.

Emma Johnston

The Bobby Lees
Bellevue
IPECAC RECORDINGS

Barely controlled and ferociously rocking third LP.

Album number three and The Bobby Lees sound like they're going to be right at home on FNM singer Mike Patton's Ipecac label, the grimy garage-punk thrashings of *Beauty Pageant* (2018) and *Skin Suit* (2020) developing into tightly focused and potently addictive nihilistic assaults of riff-heavy noise. Guitarist Sam Quartin takes her psycho-babble vocals to new levels of unhingedness on tracks like *Be My Enemy*, *Monkey Mind*, the superb *Death Train* (possibly their *Ace Of Spades*?) and the very fine *Hollywood Junkyard*. Meanwhile, on a different tack the low-key lo-fi shuffle of *Little Table* and sinister piano-led whisperings of *Strange Days* (nothing to do with The Doors) show there's plenty more to The Bobby Lees than full-tilt caustic rock'n'roll, terrific though that is.

Disturbingly honest and uncomfortably raw, *Bellevue* ain't pretty but it rocks like a bastard.

Essi Berelian

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

Perfect Plan: making great music sound easy.

Perfect Plan
Brace For Impact
FRONTIERS

The album is called *Brace For Impact*, and those words are good advice.

Perfect Plan arrived on the scene in 2018 with their seismic and appropriately titled debut *All Rise*. The Swedish quintet formed four years earlier but were hailed as an overnight sensation, and right off the bat Kent Hill became recognised among the hottest vocal properties around. Then with 2020's *Time For A Miracle* Perfect Plan proved that *All Rise* was no fluke.

Now comes the 'difficult third album'. But Perfect Plan don't do banana skins. Where so many bands have instant impact, only to then falter, these guys just make it all seem so easy. Maybe that's because they're a real band and not some assembly line 'project'. Hill remains glacier-cool, offering shades of vintage David Coverdale and Joey Tempest on *Surrender* and *Devil's Got The Blues*, but this is no mere one-man band. All parts make up the whole, and Perfect Plan still offer an immaculate link between Scandi-AOR and established kingpins of the genre such as Foreigner and Journey.

Captain Black Beard
Neon Surprise
MIGHTY MUSIC

Much like their Swedish compatriots Night Flight Orchestra, Captain Black Beard still hanker for the 80s and dance-floor boogie nights. With a sound they describe as "disco-AOR", *Neon Surprise* is crammed with Scandi-seasoned melodies and driven by crisp rhythm patterns designed to get feet moving. *Miami Vice*'s Don Johnson called and he wants his aviator shades back.

Lillian Axe
From Womb To Tomb
GLOBAL ROCK

Even after almost four decades in the business, Lillian Axe mainman Steve Blaze considers *From Womb To Tomb* his group's magnum opus. With tracks that include tuneful hard rock with Queen-esque pomp and flamenco guitars, the New Orleans-based band's first record in a decade goes some way to backing up such an ambitious claim.

This House We Built
This House We Built
THWB

Carrying the endorsement of Tyketto's Danny Vaughn, This House We Built are an immensely promising quartet from Scarborough with a confident, summery and sometimes funk-fuelled style that will leave the listener grinning from ear to ear. Although self-financed at present, the band are constructing sturdy foundations for a future career.

Streetlight Circus
Super Fine Sugar
ESCAPE MUSIC

From the streets of New York City comes this four-man Circus, now trumpeting a third full-length album of kick-ass yet hummable rock'n'roll anthems. Boosted by cameos from ex-TNT frontman Tony Harnell and members of Kix, D-A-D, The Knack and more, *Super Fine Sugar* is a neat fusion of broken-bottle attitude with sugar-buzz commercialism. It's a lot of fun.

Alter Bridge

Pawns & Kings NAPALM

Arena rockers rediscover their inner Metallica, on what might be their best album yet.

Generally speaking, Alter Bridge are at their best when balancing the physicality and heft of Metallica with the soulful emotion of a Pearl Jam or Soundgarden. While myriad other elements and influences can be factored in, the dichotomy of metallic thrust and post-grunge radio friendliness has defined every Alter Bridge record to date, and with *Pawns & Kings* the band couldn't have tipped the scales towards metal more if they'd dropped an ACME-issue anvil on them, Wile E Coyote-style.

Whether a credit to the production of Michael 'Elvis' Baskette or just that the band decided to go right for the throat this time, there's a punchiness to every track that recalls (and may even surpass) the likes of *White Knuckles* or *Bleed It Dry*. Thankfully this isn't at the cost of anthemic potential; Myles Kennedy's vocals are among the most inspiring and captivating in modern rock, every chorus inviting full-throated singalongs.

From start to finish, the album is taut and perfectly balanced. More impressive is that the band have achieved this with some of the longest tracks of their career, crafting epics in every sense of the word. Opener *This Is War* sets the stage with apocalyptic choirs and almost blast-beat drums, and things escalate from there as the singalongs get bigger and the riffs harder across *Dead Among The Living*, *Silver Tongue* and *Sin After Sin*. Even ballad *Stay* has a lively heartbeat that ensures no momentum is lost, and Mark Tremonti's shuffle to lead vocals is a tantalising hint at what could lie in store for the band.

With the same band members playing together for almost 20 years now, there is an inherent sense of intuitiveness and comfort to the way Alter Bridge fit together. Guitarist Tremonti slings arena-sized riffs, Scott Phillips punctuates those riffs with drum beats that feel like a punch to the face, and bassist Brian Marshall injects almost sludgy levels of low end into the heavier moments, while Kennedy soars above it all with his golden-throated vocals. It's a familiar formula, but one that has enabled Alter Bridge to be elevated to playing massive venues around the world.

Pawns & Kings isn't anything radically different for Alter Bridge. Rather, it perfects every element of the band's sound and ensures everything is top-of-the-line. Make no mistake about it – this is the Rolls-Royce of Alter Bridge records, and a high-water mark to which all rock hopefuls should aspire.

Rich Hobson

Lamb Of God

Omens NUCLEAR BLAST

Music to crash cars to (and that's a good thing).

Pessimism runs deep through Lamb Of God's catalogue. So it's little wonder that their latest, and best, album is riven with fury, given the current hellscape America and the rest of the world is waking up to these days.

For those unfamiliar with the jackhammer approach of Lamb Of God (educating and breaking heads for more than 20 years), *Omens* is as good a starting point as any. Heavy yet eloquent, full tilt yet considered, it's a record that is incandescent with rage, and clever too. Take opening track *Nevermore*, which thunders and screeches and then falls open to reveal singer D Randall Blythe dropping down a gear into a monologue that is as much Henry Rollins as it is Tom Waits. And while you're still marvelling at this fait accompli, they reverse a fire truck into your senses. It's revelatory.

Philip Wilding

Suede

Autofiction WARNER MUSIC

Suede plug in and play; still sound enormous.

Autofiction: autobiography, at one literary remove. After decades of documenting the drama, grit and hedonistic deviance of youth, and several recent albums (2016's *Night Thoughts*, 2018's *The Blue Hour*) featuring cinematic overtones and art-house horror narrative threads, Suede's ninth album is a back-to-basics 'punk' affair utilising their raw alt.rock thrust to deliver some equally unvarnished personal truths.

She Still Leads Me On powers through singer Brett Anderson's grief at the loss of his mother, *15 Again* glorifies teenage ennui in the form of soaring synth-rock – *Autofiction* is heavy on Neil Codling's stratospheric synth work, as well as Anderson's philosophical spoken-word verses – and the diabolic glam *That Boy On The Stage* gets inside the head of a performer bottling up a lifetime's rage. How much of this, or of the album's piano-led cosmic break-up balladry (*Drive Myself Home*, *What Am I Without You?*), is confessional Anderson autobiography in keeping with his recent book *Afternoons With The Blinds Drawn* is all part of *Autofiction*'s (and Suede's) embedded enigma. But given that for Suede 'stripped back' still means ballsy and bombastic, it slots beautifully into one of alt.rock's most refined catalogues. The scorching, Cure-like final track is titled *Turn Off Your Brain And Yell*, but when Suede try it they naturally bellow poetry.

Mark Beaumont

Various

Here It Is: A Tribute To Leonard Cohen BLUE NOTE

New skins stand on old ceremony.

There's a genuine attempt here to swerve the stuffily reverential, which sometimes results in heartbreaking beauty and sometimes in misfires. Producer/musician Larry Klein masterminds, assembling off-the-chart tasteful musicians such as guitarist Bill Frisell and saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins. The backdrops are thus exquisitely deft. The guest vocalists clearly adore Cohen's songs, and on this range of classics and deep cuts some just go for it – Sarah McLachlan on *Hallelujah* and Mavis Staples on *If It Be Your Will* don't hold back. However, Peter Gabriel on *Here It Is* and Iggy Pop on *You Want It Darker* both affect a Cohen impersonation – if Cohen sang even lower (Iggy pretty much does spoken-word). It's a bit weird. The ubiquitous Gregory Porter, David Gray, Norah Jones and James Taylor (whose light touch on *Coming Back To You* recalls Willie Nelson) also pay their respects. Minor falls, major lifts.

Chris Roberts

Queensrÿche

Digital Noise Alliance

CENTURY MEDIA/SONY MUSIC

Art-metal veterans dial it in on album number 16.

Queensrÿche are a long way from metal's cutting edge in 2022. This fourth album since the acrimonious departure of original singer Geoff Tate is solidly dramatic and inarguably proficient, but the inspiration and imagination that fuelled 1986's *Rage For Order* and 1988's state-of-the-art *Operation: Mindcrime* are long gone.

CHUCK BRUECKMANN/PRESS

Digital Noise Alliance's title is only marginally clunkier than the tracks on it. Mid-paced plodders *Lost In Sorrow* and *Nocturnal Light* find the band trudging where they once soared. Vocalist Todd La Torre hits the big notes, but he lacks the range and control of the mercurial Tate. The stately *Forest* is a high point, largely because it sounds like it's been beamed in from 1990. But unfortunately any good work is undone by a grisly, dads-at-the-wedding-reception-style cover of Billy Idol's *Rebel Yell*.

Maybe it's unfair to compare *Digital Noise Alliance* to albums that are more than 30 years old, but they're the benchmark to which Queensrÿche will forever be held. Almost inevitably, they've fallen way short here.

Dave Everley

Corky Laing

Finnish Sessions

ON STAGE/TIMEZONE

The sleighride rolls on.

Drummer Corky Laing, the last surviving member of 70s behemoths Mountain, is still playing, still recording, with a big network of musicians and contacts built up over 50 years. So after 2019's *The Toledo Sessions*, when he got hemmed in by the pandemic, he escaped to Finland where he could continue to record.

Laing's drumming – hard but not heavy – was a distinctive element in Mountain's pioneering hard-rock style which has never really gone out of fashion, particularly among guitarists. Which is why he can lay down a solid bedrock for an array of hard-rock permutations that the musicians (who here include guitarist Conny Bloom of Sweden's Electric Boys) clearly get a kick out of playing. Laing's songs are not strong on melody, though, so it's strange that the best of them, *Whatcha Doin'?*, is positioned at the end of the album when it should be the opening track.

Hugh Fielder

Bush

The Art Of Survival BMG

Ninth album by the band from here who are big over there.

Long sneered at for going for the American-commercial jugular and finding it, Bush have always been more than just frontman Gavin Rossdale's still-impressive cheekbones. And they've been getting more extreme musically. 2020's *The Kingdom* repositioned them as riff-driven heavyweights, and *The Art Of Survival* is more of the same but heavier still. Guitarist Chris Traynor cranks out slow-paced grindcore riffs midway between Black Sabbath and Alice In Chains, such as the ones that open *Kiss Me I'm Dead* or underpin *Heavy Is The Ocean*.

For all Traynor's heroics, like all Bush albums this is really Rossdale's. When they take a breather on *Creatures Of The Fire*, his Eddie Vedder-esque croon seizes the moment, and on the outstanding *Identity* he deals with paranoia ('*Please keep your kids indoors*') and loss of status ('*We used to be someone, now we're nobody*') in swashbuckling fashion.

Some people still won't take Bush seriously. It's their loss. It always was.

John Aizlewood

David Longdon

Door One ENGLISH ELECTRIC

Posthumous solo album from the Big Big Train frontman.

Big Big Train's David Longdon had all but finished this solo album when he died in an accident last November. It comes wreathed in that tragedy, but taken on its own merits it's a sophisticated, beautifully realised record.

On typically strong, soulful vocal form, Longdon is surrounded by pedigree musicians including Fish bassist Steve Vantsis, ex-King Crimson drummer Jeremy Stacey and sax virtuoso Theo Travis. With a musical palette leaning more into art-pop/rock than BBT's prog, he broaches a range of subjects including irreconcilable relationships (the anguished *Watch It Burn*, the brooding *Forgive But Not Forget*), life's inherent messiness (*There's No Ghost Like An Old Ghost*) and the performer's lot (*The Singer And The Song*, a grand showpiece). Overall the album is the sound of a great talent in full, unfettered flight, and poignant closer *Love Is All* rings all the truer for Longdon's sad absence.

Grant Moon

Gun

Calton Songs CHERRY RED

Scots rockers re-record some of their hits.

Gun have slowly built their way back into contention since reuniting in 2008. *Calton Songs* (named after their home district of Glasgow) is a rum affair indeed. There's an all-action new song, *Backstreet Brothers*, which kicks like an especially energised mule, and it's strong enough to suggest an album of new material might have been the way ahead. Elsewhere it's 'sort of acoustic' versions of old Gun favourites. So *Word Up!* has a brass section, backing vocals and a flamenco guitar solo; 2012 single *Frantic* is given a Stills-Young Band twang; and the hardy *Taking On The World* becomes a cousin of Extreme's *More Than Words*. The new setting mostly works, so *Better Days* takes on an elegiac hue born of experience, and *Inside Out*'s melody finally takes centre stage. It's difficult to avoid the suggestion that water is being trod, but it's no disgrace.

John Aizlewood

Welshly Arms

Wasted Words & Bad Decisions SNAKEFARM

Irresistible choruses from start to finish.

Cleveland blues-rockers Welshly Arms seem to have cornered the market in soaring and soulful pop-rock anthems on *Wasted Words & Bad Decisions*. Acres of gospel-style backing vocals and endless sampled hand claps drive its 13 tracks, along with immense melodies and uplifting choruses cunningly designed to inspire stadium-sized singalongs, and an intrusively loud pop production sheen.

The best tracks are those where you can actually hear some guitars – *Are You Lonely, Have It All, Burn Me Alive* and relatively restrained closer *Find My Way Home* – otherwise, it's a collection of professionally crafted ear-worm singles, mostly clocking in at around the three-minute mark, that you'll find yourself humming along to at 3am instead of sleeping.

Essi Berelian

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

Sick Thoughts: irresponsible, sloppy, nihilistic and utterly delicious.

Sick Thoughts

Heaven Is No Fun TOTAL PUNK

Sick Thoughts is one dude – Drew Owen – from nowheresville, Maryland who releases albums seemingly once a week. He is a true agent of chaos, and the music he churns out is gloriously sleazy, mean-spirited, punky rock'n'roll. This is his latest, at least of this writing, and it's an absolute belter.

From the satanic Ramones of *Mother I Love Satan* to the dive-bombing trash-punk of *Wake Up Drunk*, it's the perfect soundtrack to juvenile delinquency. I mean, half the songs are just threats (*I Hate You, Horrible Death, I'm Gonna Waste You* etc). Your head will bop, your hip will shake, you'll probably start smoking cigarettes and drinking beer again. I'm sure most of the people who actually have to deal with Drew Owen breathe a sigh of relief whenever he leaves town. But me, I think he's a true rock'n'roll hero.

Heaven Is No Fun is completely irresponsible, sloppy, nihilistic and utterly delicious. You might hate it, but you'll still love it.

Lucifer Jones

No Life Til Death SELF-RELEASED

Hello from the gutters of NYC, which are filled with dog shit, vomit, stale wine, urine, blood and Lucifer Jones. This band sound like they exist only in a trashy slasher movie, a world full of sex and knives and perpetual midnight. Imagine Wolfman Jack fronting Thrill Kill Kult with Helios Creed on guitar. I love it. So grimy it's been under my fingernails for a week.

Boozelords

Hangoverture SELF-RELEASED

Dead-enders from Cincinattii who essentially mix '77-era Kiss with melodic punk rock and then spend the rest of the weekend vomiting in the bath tub. As the title would suggest, this is a party record, and they hammer it home with woozy tracks like *Urine Asshole* and *Boner Pills*. I wouldn't last a day with these maniacs, but they sound like fun.

Perfect Strangers

Self-titled SELF-RELEASED

On this debut EP these Canadian rockers alternate between hooky power-pop and chugging hard rock, and both scratch a different itch. You like *Starry Eyes* (The Records song)? You'll love *Call Me*. Like getting sweaty, drinking until you're blind and rocking out to BTO all night? You'll love *Need Some Lovin', Brainwashed*, or *Tonight*. I like both.

Death Dumplings

Self-titled SELF-RELEASED

Okay, so the world's falling apart, and a flood will probably wash my house away in five years, but at least I got to live during the same time as Death Dumplings. The Brisbane bashers deliver acidic fuzz-punk with such wild abandon I had to listen to this under my desk. I might not know much, but I know *(I Love) Pan Fried Dumplings* is the rock'n'roll anthem we need right now.

THE HARD STUFF
ALBUMS

Ginger Wildheart & The Sinners

Ginger Wildheart & The Sinners WICKED COOL

Country, soul and rock'n'roll from the musically wandering sometime Wildheart.

From a man with a work ethic that would have made inventor Thomas Edison (a man who would rather take naps through the day than waste a whole night sleeping) blanch, Ginger Wildheart's latest album is a blissed-out stroll through Americana and country music. For longtime Ginger watchers, this should come as no surprise, given his work with Jason & The Scorchers, and the Hank Williams-like ache that permeated 2017's elegiac *Ghost In The Tanglewood*.

And as brilliant a solo artist Ginger can be, it's good to see him back with a band again, even relinquishing lead vocals to Neil Ivison on a handful of tracks, including a grand reworking of Quo's *Dirty Water* that spits happy, boundless energy. Which is, after all, what a great country rock record should do: make you want to punch the air and holler like you were raised off the Crooked Road that runs through southwest Virginia. And then, like all good country rock, switch gears and break your heart like it was nothing more than a dry twig on a lonely forest floor that someone stood on. Which the band manage to do at least three or four times on this record, with the kind of sickening ease that puts you in mind of what it must have been like to date Warren Beatty in the 70s and be tossed aside like so much used Kleenex. Horribly affecting is the wonderful lament of *Breakout*, which sits like a stone on your chest and casts a shadow like The Jayhawks once did at their impeachable best.

Lately, Always too has that wonderful tone of regret and recall and nights spent with a tumbler of whisky and a reel of memories that won't stop flickering through your mind's eye. While the Georgia Satellites' *Six Years Gone* is given thrilling life, as Ginger explains: "It was the first song I wanted to play with the band back when this was just an idea. I became a bit obsessed with it while in LA for Lemmy's funeral, and carried it around in my heart from then until we all congregated at the studio."

It's not all gloom, though. The album rattles and rocks with the excellent *Wasted Times*, and the simply goofy *Code Of The Road* wears a crooked smile.

Exultant, introspective and a joy of a record. Let the sin in.

Philip Wilding

Buzzcocks

Sonics In The Soul CHERRY RED

Mancunian punk legends keep the flag flying.

The loss of their principal songwriter would have seen less committed bands throw in the towel. However, such is the indomitable rock'n'roll spirit of co-founder and fellow tunesmith Steve Diggle, that when Pete Shelley passed away in 2018 the Buzzcocks' future was never really in doubt. If anything, adversity has brought out the best in them.

Recorded in London during lockdown and produced by Diggle and the splendidly named Laurence Loveless, their new album *Sonics In The Soul* is a riot from start to finish. Opener *Senses Out Of Control* sets the tone, all pent-up aggression and cheese wire-sharp guitars, while *Just Gotta Let It Go* is a menacing new-wave chug. But there's a melodic clout beneath the bluster. *Nothingness World* is a Hollies-esque nugget, while the Who-like *Manchester Rain* is similarly civic-minded, Diggle musing on midlife concerns while caught in the inevitable local downpour. Factor in breezy power-pop (*Venus Eye*), Hawkwind-esque space-rock (*Experimental Farm*) and punky paranoia (*Bad Dreams*), and the overall result is the sound of a band rebooted and reinvigorated.

Paul Moody

Orianthi

Rock Candy FRONTIERS MUSIC

Strangely short album needs more killer, less filler.

Gradually carving out a direction for herself again after several years working on various collaborative projects, Australian guitar slinger Orianthi's second album in two years (the simply titled *O* was released in 2020) is a bit of an odd move. With songwriter/producer multi-instrumentalist Jacob Bunton as her chief collaborator, the 30 minutes of rock'n'roll here feels uneven and unfinished. Book-ended by two instrumentals – *Illuminate (Part I) and Illuminate (Part II)* – there are some solidly rocking tracks such as first single *Light It Up, Fire Together* and the industrial-flavoured *Void*, but the most fully realised track is the rather vanilla acoustic number *Living Is Like Dying Without You*, while potentially the most interesting idea is the super-heavy *Witches & The Devil*, which doesn't quite touch two-minutes.

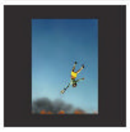
Greater focus on some killer tunes seems like the most obvious goal to aim for.

Essi Berelian

Yeah Yeah Yeahs

Cool It Down SECRETLY CANADIAN

It wasn't broke, so they haven't tried to fix it.



This is the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' first new music in more than nine years, and it's as haunting, euphoric, outright beautiful and disconcerting as we've grown to expect from the NYC trio: same chilling, otherworldly vocals from Karen O, same tricky stately electronica and beats from Nick Zinner and Brian Chase.

The opening brace of tracks on what is their fifth studio album set the scene: in their melancholy sadness and elegiac sweep of emotion, *Lovebomb* and *Splitting Off The Edge Of The World* (featuring Perfume Genius) recall the dissonant grace and beauty of LCD Soundsystem, Laurie Anderson, Daniel Johnston; righteous EDM mixed with post-punk attitude and Williamsburg sass. *Fleez* is a major stand-out, the way it grates and chides the listener. Lyrics reflect environmental awareness: fear, anger. The voice on *Blacktop* echoes to dissolution and back: instant grace, nostalgia and euphoria battling for control, the beats mesmeric and poignant.

This is one helluva return.

Everett True

Jimmy Hall

Ready Now KTBA

Still Smilin'.

Joe Bonamassa's worthy mission to rescue ageing blues/R&B performers and revive their careers on his KTBA label has alighted on Jimmy Hall, singer and harp player with 70s southern rockers Wet Willie.

Hall hasn't exactly been idle since (most notably turning up on Jeff Beck's 1985 album *Flash* and joining his band from 2014 to 2019), but he wasn't about to turn down the chance to record with Bonamassa and his band and write a bunch of songs with him.

Hall's voice and harp playing are still in fine shape, as the bouncy opener *Jumpin' For Joy* demonstrates, and the soulful *Dream Release*, written about his friend Gregg Allman, has shades of Southside Johnny. Warren Haynes and Jared James Nichols also drop by.

Hugh Fielder

Tedeschi Trucks Band

I Am The Moon FANTASY

A band the size of a rugby team, but a lot less violent.

The seemingly spiritual connections between Derek And The Dominos and the Tedeschi Trucks Band run deep and are too numerous to list here, but there is one major difference between the two bands. When Eric Clapton and co. recorded they were balancing on the very edge of sobriety and sanity; TTB – whose *I Am The Moon* album was inspired by the same Arabic poem as *Layla* – appear to operate on an altogether more serene plane.

They're a band completely shorn of rough edges, but never has smooth sounded so sublime. Even across four discs, things never get ugly. From the breezy chug of opener *Hear My Dear* to carefree closer *Another Day*, it's an album that gently unspools, never hurried. Susan Tedeschi's voice is gorgeous, Derek Trucks's guitar tone almost celestial, and there are several moments where the band – with a minimum of apparent effort – conjure moments of palpable transcendence.

Fraser Lewry

Grand Theft Audio

Pass Me The Conch

TECHNICAL FOUL

Re-formed Britrockers down to a duo, with no ill effects.

Since getting back together in 2020, two decades after briefly making a splash, GTA sound revitalised even though their core members are now just two – frontman Jay Butler and erstwhile Wildhearts drummer Ritch Battersby.

There are strong echoes of 90s-style dance-rock here, but who cares when it's so expertly turned. *Scrub Up* is an air-punching opener blending a dancey verse with a booming rock chorus, like Jesus Jones embracing the devil's music, while *Bad Instinct* has a cracking bass line thrumming through it as if EMF have been held hostage by the hard rock liberation front. *Bury The Day*, meanwhile, channels the punky intensity of Battersby's other band. It's all shot through with a distinct world-view, too, as on the sardonic *Gods Of Rock* and *The Load*'s angry polemic against an uncaring modern world, where the advice is '*better not be poor and don't get old*'.

Johnny Sharp

Dropkick Murphys

This Machine Still Kills Fascists DUMMY LUCK MUSIC

Woody would've done it this way.

Boston politico folk-punks Dropkick Murphys are no strangers to American folk legend Woody Guthrie, having established themselves early this century with *I'm Shipping Up To Boston* with lyrics that singer Ken Casey found at the Woody Guthrie Archive. A decade ago his daughter Nora Guthrie began collecting more unpublished lyrics, which the band have now turned into an album, adapting the slogan on Woody's guitar as its title and recording the album at his Tulsa birthplace.

They've even paid Woody the compliment of going completely acoustic for the record, although if you think that has diminished their power and impact, one listen to the galloping opener, *Two 6's Upside Down*, a gambler's lament that races through love, loss, murder and punishment in short order, will set you right.

Alcohol looms larger than politics in many of the lyrics, and country punk Nikki Lane joins in on *Never Git Drunk No More* and Woody's grandson contributing Dobro and backing vocals.

Hugh Fielder

Blind Guardian

The God Machine

NUCLEAR BLAST

Power-metal veterans show no signs of running out of juice.

After 30-plus years on the power metal front lines, Blind Guardian remain as ambitious as ever. *The God Machine*, the German band's twelfth studio album, is a characteristically dramatic collision of Teutonic pomp, trad-metal heft and singer/mastermind Hansi Kürsch's klaxon-in-a-wind-tunnel vocals.

But there's a complexity to this album that sets Blind Guardian apart from most Euro metal cheesemongers. When it shoots for the epic, as on the Neil Gaiman-inspired *The Secrets Of The American Gods*, Kürsch throws in enough twists and clever sonic detail to avoid raise-your-flagons-high bombast. Still, there's nothing here to scare the horses – the kick-drum barrage of *Blood Of The Elves* could be the soundtrack to a hi-octane *Dungeons & Dragons* campaign.

There are apparently some concessions to real life here – Kürsch has talked about the album tapping in to themes of paranoia, bereavement and modern-day witch hunts – but they're buried deep. Then again, no one is coming to Blind Guardian for a shot of reality.

Dave Everley

Pulled Apart By Horses

Reality Cheques ALCOPOP!

Leeds rockers strip things back to the bones for album five.

A lot has changed in Pulled Apart By Horses' world in recent months. In the run-up to recording *Reality Cheques*, their fifth album, they parted company with guitarist James Brown, leaving them as a trio with bassist Rob Lee stepping into the breach to take over on six strings.

Duelling guitars are out, and a new, rawer sense of urgency is in as they kick things off with the moody, almost gothic *Pipe Dream* (well they are from Leeds, the spiritual home of snakebite-and-black-fuelled nights shrouded in dry ice). From there they head straight into the garage with a set of gritty, old-school, oil-smeared, no-nonsense rock'n'roll, presented with a snarl and a Ramonesy, gum-chewing swagger. Lo-fi to the point that it's threatening to fall apart at any moment, it's the sound of a band rediscovering the sheer joy of bashing out noise just for their own amusement. It seems that minimalism is in this season. And it rather suits them.

Emma Johnston

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Sun Voyager

Sun Voyager RIPPLE MUSIC

Occupying the dense, seismic psychedelic void that drones endlessly between Spacemen 3, Allmans, Hawkwind and Sabbath, this second from the New York trio boasts a relentlessly peaking production job that will most assuredly mince your brain to paté. **7/10**

Boston Manor

Datura SHARPTONE

The Blackpool quintet's fourth is a 27-minute "full-length" that's "inspired by vocalist Henry Cox drinking too much at the height of the pandemic". Despite aiming to create immersive noir soundscapes, it's been effectively produced to death. A cold, clinical experience. **5/10**

Mrs Beckett

Unattractively Needy SELF-RELEASED

Generously infused with the blazing spirit of tight but shambolic, brink-dwelling rock'n'roll, North-East reprobate trio Mrs Beckett ally literate Tom Waits-edged grit with reliably loose, instinctively louche Johnny Thunders guitar swagger, and the result is only ever glorious. **8/10**

Ringo Starr

EP3 INFO@REPUBLICMEDIA.NET

It's hard to dislike Ringo. Few have stacked up quite so much gilt-edged goodwill, but he'll always be the fourth-best Beatle. *EP3* offers four more cannily constructed, upbeat, Auto-Tuned tunes to accompany willy-nilly peace-sign deployment. Nice enough, but hardly fab. **5/10**

Tim Burgess

Typical Music BELLA UNION

Typical Music is an astonishing Rockfield-born double LP that confirms the ex-Charlatans frontman as a truly significant talent. A little bit Syd, slightly Denim, packed with 60s/70s charm and seductive ear worms, it's a brimming grab-bag of brilliance and a total joy. **8/10**

Revival Black

Under The Light TMR ROCK

Liverpool's Revival Black are rapidly shaping up as one of the roaring twenties' rock bands to beat. Dynamic riffs, propulsive beats and bang-on gang vox tick every last box, but it's Dan Byrne's astonishing multi-octave lead vocals that effortlessly win the day. Blinding. **8/10**

WACO

Rock Spirit Absolute Joy VENN

Who even knew there was a common ground between classic Van Halen and Art Brut for London's WACO to not only inhabit, but also excel in. This aptly titled third album bestrides genre to serially surprise: too rock for punk, too catchy for cutting edge. Just ace. **8/10**

The Milk Men

Spin The Bottle MILK MEN MUSIC

London's the Milk Men are being sold as some sort of Dr Feelgood, but while their roots may well be in Thames Delta R&B (their bassist is Mick Green's son), there's simply no grit, spontaneity or Canvey fire herein. Maybe it's the production, but whatever… Meh. **5/10**

BLITZPØP

MDMA EP SELF-RELEASED

While boasting a line-up of Vintage Caravan and Mother's Cake members, and simultaneously tapping into grunge, soul, fuzzed-up funk and electronica sources, it's the magnetic allure of personality-packed vocalist Pia Unterlechner that sells this six-tracker. **8/10**

Tyla's Dogs D'Amour

Tree Bridge Cross KING OUTLAW/CARGO

Almost 40 years into an ever-prolific, ill-disciplined, multi-discipline career as artist/rock'n'roller, the top Dog has steadily developed into something of a national treasure, and this gritty half-acoustic double set is pure belter. **8/10**

The House Of Love

A State Of Grace CHERRY RED

While some stockpiled toilet rolls during C-word lockdowns, others plumbed rich artistic depths. Take THOL's Guy Chadwick, who's returned rejuvenated. *A State Of Grace* boasts a grunge groove here, an unexpected banjo there. It's a bit Primals and a lot excellent. **7/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM

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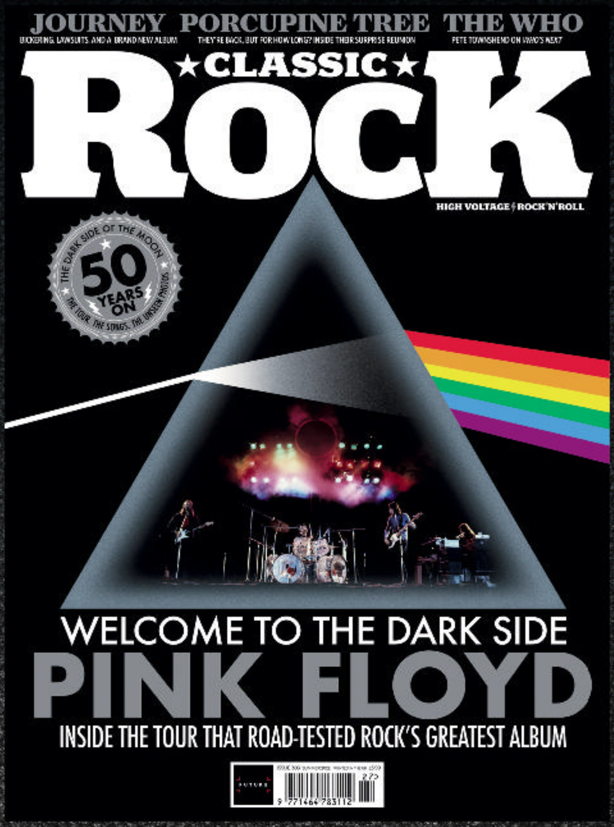

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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES

Venom

In Nomine Satanas BMG

The evil that men do.

This news just in: Venom are to be awarded the freedom of the city of Newcastle for their services to heavy metal horribleness. When approached for comment, frontman Cronos said simply: "Wooargh."

We just made that up, of course. While Ozzy and Tony can perform at the Commonwealth Games, and Black Sabbath be the subject of a petition to be honoured by the Queen, Venom – who, it could be argued, have influenced at least as many, if not more, artists and music genres as the Sabs – languish in relative obscurity, somewhere in the distant portals of Hell.

That will never change, particularly not in the current climate of wokeism and cancel culture. Did you know that Wordle refuses to accept 'Satan' as a five-letter suggestion? It fair makes the cauldron boil.

Perhaps it all comes down to niceties. Sabbath may have been menacing, but they were never truly evil – not like Venom were and, to a certain extent, with Cronos the sole remaining original member, still are. Plus, we're not just talking about 'evil' in the diabolical, horn-headed sense (Venom's speciality, of course). For example, *Poison*, track five on their debut album *Welcome To Hell*, sounds even more abhorrent today than it did back in 1981. Briefly: Cronos contracts an STD after a one-night stand, and rages: *'Poisoned! That dirty little bitch has got me poisoned!'* It's chilling, vicious, undeniably violent. Thus the template for extreme metal was drawn.

So to basics. Previously released as a deluxe vinyl box set in 2019, *In Nomine Satanas* is now available in six-CD/single-DVD format. The collection includes Venom's original recordings for legendary Geordie NWOBHM label Neat Records, ranging from the aforementioned *Welcome To Hell*, via seminal second album *Black Metal* (1982), to live album *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* (1986). Also included is the *Sons Of Satan* collection of previously unreleased demos, including some of their earliest known performances. Finally, there's the DVD: *Seventh Date Of Hell – Live At The Hammersmith Odeon, 1984*. (This writer was there, and can confirm that the experience was indeed hellish – in the best possible way. Thirty-eight years later, the scars still haven't healed.)

So yeah, respect to Cronos and his Venom cohorts Mantas and Abaddon, aka Conrad, Jeffrey and Anthony. Where would heavy metal be today without them? In a much healthier, less scary place, for sure. And that would be no damn good at all.

■■■■■■■■■■ *(Are you sure?! …Ed)*

Geoff Barton

Monster Magnet

Reissues NAPALM

Heavy hitters get the vinyl reissue treatment

In the early noughties Monster Magnet were in a strange state of flux. Despite their potent mix of stoner rock, psychedelia and retro styling breaking through to a wider audience via their albums *Powertrip* and *God Says No*, the venerable New Jersey band found themselves out of deal with a major and back with an indie, while negotiating line-up changes that saw the introduction of drummer Bob Pantella and bassist Jim Baglino. And yet, as evidenced by these two reissues (on vinyl for the first time), those setbacks strengthened the band's resolve.

Guided by the warped hand and mind of frontman Dave Wyndorf, what's evident is that Monster Magnet are fun in a way that so many bands aren't. Acutely aware of rock's inherent stupidity, their music is fuelled by a sharp sense of humour and irreverence that's underpinned by a fierce wit and intelligence.

Of these two records, 2007's *4-Way Diablo* (**8/10**) just edges 2004's *Monolithic Baby!* (**7/10**) with its slightly more subtle approach. The sex obsessions of the latter (*On The Verge, Supercruel*) are replaced by rougher diamonds dug from rock's deepest mines (*Blow Your Mind*), but both albums rock hard and true.

Julian Marszalek

Rory Gallagher

Deuce 50th Anniversary Edition UMC

The late Irish bluesmaster's second album gets the bells-and-whistles treatment.

Although coming less than nine months after his self-titled debut, Rory Gallagher's second solo album, *Deuce*, was a big leap forward in both focus and songwriting, and has long been rated highly by fans.

Deuce was self-produced, and fashioned piecemeal in late 1971 while Gallagher toured (with Jerry McAvoy on bass and Wilgar Campbell on drums), to maintain a live feel. Gentler tunes *I'm Not Awake Yet* and the jazzy *Maybe I Will* were not a natural fit for his live set, but the acoustic *Don't Know Where I'm Going* certainly was. On the rockier side, *Whole Lot Of People* boasts some superb slide guitar, but the stand-out is blistering closer *Crest Of A Wave*, just edging *In Your Town*.

There are more concise formats, but the four-CD version is best. It includes a 64-page hardback book with a foreword by Johnny Marr and photos by Mick Rock (who shot the cover), alongside a new mix of the original album. Two more discs deliver 28 previously unreleased alternative takes. That's too many, really, but they do prove that Gallagher rarely fluffed a guitar lick, and presumably he rejected these versions because he knew he could sing them better. Most essential among them are three solo acoustic stabs at *Whole Lot Of People*, those home demos closing Disc 3, and a crackin' nine-minute *In Your Town*.

Even better, CD4 brings together seven '71 radio-session tracks broadcast by Radio Bremen and a six-song BBC radio *In Concert* set from '72, both including *Messin' With The Kid*. In these live showcases Gallagher sounds untouchable.

■■■■■■■■□□

Neil Jeffries

Marianne Faithfull

Songs Of Innocence And Experience 1965-1995 UMC

Rhapsody for a Bohemian queen.

The long and chequered life of Marianne Faithfull is celebrated in this double LP/CD from the Decca and Island labels. With skilfully chosen tracks it chronicles her progression from winsome 60s chanteuse to seasoned performer of intensely personal songs. As well as survival, her creative superpower is her ability to interpret the work of other artists, be it Donovan (*Sunny Goodge Street*), Dr Hook (*The Ballad Of Lucy Jordan*) or Bob Dylan; her version of the latter's *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue* is definitive.

It marks the point where she 'lost' her sweet voice and the angelic persona projected on to her by male fantasy and found a more authentic self-expression.

Among the rarities are her original recordings of *Sister Morphine* and *Something Better* (as heard on *The Rolling Stones Rock And Roll Circus*), plus the previously unreleased *The Calm*

GETTY

Before The Storm, partly written by Lou Reed.

Tracks from Faithfull's 1979 album *Broken English*, her ravaged but defiant comeback, include a live version of *Brain Drain*, amid the woes of '*Trying to get high without having to pay*'.

Sweet or dark sides, imbibed together they're intoxicating.

Faithfull stayed afloat in a sea of decadence, salvaging treasure from life's shipwreck to inspire a late-life burst of artistry.

Claudia Elliott

Blitzkrieg

Inferno: The Complete Recordings Vol 1: 1980-1998 HNE

Blitz and pieces.

To many, Blitzkrieg are little more than a NWOBHM footnote, renowned for having inspired Metallica (who covered their song *Blitzkrieg*) and… er, that's it. So prepare to be bamboozled by the breadth of brutal brilliance on display throughout this five-CD collection – and by the fact that a post-1998 follow-up compilation is surely incoming.

Formed in 1980 by stalwart singer Brian Ross, Leicester-based Blitzkrieg split all too soon, calling it a day just a year later. Exhumed from this period is the *Blitzed Alive Cassette*, primitively showcasing the band's ferociously simplistic style. (The present-day listening experience is akin to cramming your head inside a carrier-bag full of wet socks. But it matters not a jot.)

Debut album *A Time Of Changes* finally came out in 1985, after a Ross-inspired re-formation. The track titles tell it all: *Ragnarok, Inferno, Armageddon, Hell To Pay* – chunkier than a Yorkie Bar factory and rippling with sinewy malevolence. Ten long years later a successor arrived: *Unholy Trinity*, notable for including a caustic cover of Venom's *Countess Bathory*. Third album *Ten* followed with undue haste in 1996 (unsurprisingly not referencing Pearl Jam in any way, shape or form). Then in 1998 the Blitzers bizarrely lost the plot with *The Mists Of Avalon*, part inspired by King Arthur and featuring the cloying ballad *Princess Of The World*, dedicated to the recently passed Princess Diana.

Still, rest assured normal service will be resumed when Vol. 2 arrives with overwhelming force asap.

Geoff Barton

Pete Way

Solo Albums: 2000-2004

CHERRY RED

Ramshackle trio from former UFO bassist.

Not so much a triple threat, but one album, 2000's ragged *Amphetamine* wrung dry as a live album and then reworked as an acoustic set, pretty much. Pete Way, part Artful Dodger, part old soak, all rock star, might have opted to record the raw *Amphetamine* for a bar tab or to settle one, but it's quite something to reflect on its punky energy almost two decades later. Admittedly, it sounds like a demo tape, which rather undoes the demo extras included in this reissue, but there's something rather endearing about a man who really can't sing at all putting his heart and soul into songs like *Thar's Tuff* and the engaging *American Kid (What A Shame)*.

That said, there's less to love in the diminishing returns that are the *Alive In Cleveland* and the eye-watering *Acoustic Animal* albums. What Way and his band do live to *Too Hot To Handle* would probably be a felony in any other state. Ditto his awful mangling of Waysted's *Heaven Tonight*, which is the aural equivalent of a vintage Bugatti up on bricks with the window kicked in, rendered a faded beauty – much like Way himself.

Philip Wilding

Dead Kennedys

Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables 2022 Mix

CHERRY RED

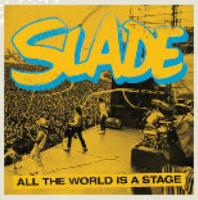
Hardcore punk classic sonically retooled.

A benchmark of the political hardcore movement, the Dead Kennedys' debut left a significant stain upon its original 1980 release. Vocalist Jello Biafra's incisive and satirical lyrics coupled with East Bay Ray's subverted surf-rock guitar stood out against the scene's increasingly generic sound. Early DKs material was influenced by the militancy of Crass and also took direction from The Clash by addressing wider societal issues as opposed to single-issue politics. Brimming with ideas and tunes despite the lyrical confrontation, the DKs lampooned everything from the American dream to the punk scene itself and even nihilistic misanthropy – as on the shockingly jaundiced *Forward To Death*.

The long-running feud between ex-vocalist Biafra and the rest of the band who now control the DK's back catalogue (guitarist East Bay Ray, bassist Klaus Flouride, drummer DH Peligro) has seen Biafra voice his displeasure over this release, issuing a dismissive 'let the buyer beware' communiqué.

Fresh Fruit's original release sounded toppy and low-fi – a raw garage tone that was arguably part of its appealing passion and urgency. Nonetheless, mixed by veteran industry engineer Chris Lord-Alge, this version delivers a fuller clarity of sound, most notably on early classic like the knowing *Holiday In Cambodia*, the distressing *Chemical Warfare* and the comical yet subversive cover of *Viva Las Vegas*.

Alex Burrows



Slade

All The World Is A Stage BMG

Five scorching live albums boxed, three of them previously unreleased.

BARRY PLUMMER/PRESS

All The World Is A Stage is as you like it: Slade banging it out with loose, licentious ferocity, so brutish and raucous that you begin to question whether punk needed to happen, and you keep checking that a fleet of jumbo jets hasn't landed in your ear canals. There's Noddy Holder defying the laws of biology with a larynx made of sandpaper; Dave Hill convinced that if the same guy signed Hendrix and him then he himself must be a mean guitarist (at one show he bursts into a blast of *Purple Haze*); Jim Lea just about holding the gang together musically, bringing violins to thrashing mobs; and Don Powell somehow both keeping it grounded and racing ahead so the others have to turn it up from 11 to 9,000. What a racket. What a riot. Arguably, nobody did adrenalin better.

Of the five furies here, 1972's *Slade Alive!* and, from a decade later, *Slade On Stage* have burned before. The former was recorded in a small theatre-studio but, famously, sounds like it took place in a war zone. On one night they'd come straight from doing *Top Of The Pops*, with *Coz I Luv You* at No.1. There are no concessions to pop, though, as they blaze through *Get Down And Get With It* and eight minutes of Steppenwolf's *Born To Be Wild*. The rather good take on The Lovin' Spoonful's *Darling Be Home Soon* is mostly sincere, the big soppy wets.

Slade On Stage sees a band back in favour after the crash-and-burn glory days, bringing the house down in Newcastle.

The new coup here is *Alive! At Reading*, capturing their 1980 headline set – they subbed for Ozzy Osbourne at the last minute, and delivered a performance that converted 80,000 sceptics – and from the opening of *Take Me Bak 'Ome* to an incandescent *Cum On Feel The Noize* they're the sultans of stomp.

From the same year, *Live At The Hucknall Miners' Welfare Club* is as earthy as its title. Nottingham gets happily knocked out.

Finally, *Live At The New Victoria* is a recording from a show in London in 1975, at which time the band were in *In Flame* mode, and the likes of *How Does It Feel* and *Everyday* reveal their secret sterling songwriting skills.

What an outfit. What a beautiful noize.

Chris Roberts

The Kinks

Muswell Hillbillies / Everybody's In Show-Biz BMGA

Everybody's a dreamer… From Muswell Hill to Hollywood.

Chronicling the songwriting genius of Ray Davies has never been easy, mainly because his glittering diamonds and pearls are often tarnished by various quirks and idiosyncrasies. And here we go again.

Muswell Hillbillies ('71) is not a concept album, but a collection of downbeat songs mostly about urban isolation and cultural paranoia, delivered with typical Kinks joie de vivre and laced with Davies's wit. These range from *Acute Schizophrenia Paranoia Blues* (*'The milkman's a spy and the grocer keeps on following me'*), *Alcohol* (*'Oh demon alcohol, sad memories I cannot recall'*), the anorexia-themed *Skin And Bone* (*'Her father and her mother and her sisters and brothers couldn't see her when she walked by'*). It's all summed up with delicious irony on *Complicated Life*: *'Well I cut down women, I cut out booze/I stopped ironing my shirts, cleaning my shoes/I stopped going to work, stopped reading the news/I sit and twiddle my thumbs cos I got nothing to do.'*

Unfortunately Davies's decision to record the songs on old 60s and 50s equipment, ostensibly to give them a nostalgic feel, instead gives them a murky, uninviting veneer. The good news is that Davies has since found another set of master tapes, and the 2022 remix makes it much easier to hear the album's pleasures.

The aforementioned songs all show up on the live disc of the double *Everybody's A Star*, recorded at New York's Carnegie Hall in 1972 with the Kinks in dynamic form; Ray's clear vocals, brother Dave's slashing guitar and Mick Avory's rattling drums. The only dampener, at the end, is Ray's ambivalence to his own heritage. *Lola* is reduced to less than two minutes of an audience singalong while the band appear to be tuning up, and there's an inappropriate campness surrounding *Til The End Of The Day*.

The real problem with *Everybody's A Star* is the first disc of studio-recorded songs, which are loosely themed around the tedium of life on the road, which is unlikely to resonate unless you are or have been a touring musician. Ray's wit struggles against a catalogue of whinges on titles like *Here Comes Yet Another Day*, *Maximum Consumption*, *Unreal Reality*, *Sitting In My Hotel* and *Look A Little On The Sunnyside*. The exception is the incandescent masterpiece *Celluloid Heroes*, a stroll down Hollywood Boulevard paying tribute to a host of film stars and what their fame means to Ray and the rest of us. It puts the rest of the record to shame.

Hugh Fielder

Pink Floyd

Animals WARNERS

Pigs fly again. Finally.

After sitting on the shelf for a couple of years while Roger Waters reignited his feud with David Gilmour over an essay he wanted to have in the sleeve-notes (none of the other Floyd reissues have one), the remixed version of Pink Floyd's 1977 album *Animals* finally gets released.

It was the only Floyd album to be recorded at their Brittania Row studio, and the sound of *Animals* is as bleak as Waters's stark, Orwellian view of the world over three lengthy songs that the comparative tenderness of the two book-ending acoustic pieces does nothing to dispel. The fact that the band were sinking into an autocracy at the same time simply adds to the grim atmosphere.

The remix, particularly the 5.1 surround-sound version, separates the densely layered tracks to reveal Floyd's trademark attention to detail, but the resulting sound feels hollowed out and brittle rather than enhanced, and the vocoded barks grunts and bleats, not to mention Waters's own vitriolic remix of the 23rd psalm on *Sheep*, are even more harrowing. Younger listeners may also be curious about the identity of Mary Whitehouse, the contemporary moral guardian who is another target of Waters's ire.

Hugh Fielder

Creedence Clearwater Revival

At The Royal Albert Hall

CRAFT

Chooglin' chart-toppers at the peak of their powers.

By the time Creedence Clearwater Revival rolled into London in April 1970 for two Royal Albert Hall sell-outs, they were in the middle of an extraordinary run of creativity that saw the hard-touring four-piece releasing five albums – all going US Top 10 – in just 24 months. They must have been exhausted.

In 1980, an album of the first show was released with much hoo-ha as *The Royal Albert Hall Concert*. Unfortunately the tapes were in fact from the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum Concert of January 1970.

Fast-forward another 42 years, and what is (presumably) the real deal – in its entirety, albeit with a sightly different set-list from the Oakland show – is finally with us. Restored and mixed by Giles Martin and Sam Okell – who worked wonders with The Beatles' *Get Back* footage – it's a pristine listening experience, with little between-song chat. It showcases CCR's many strengths and, on a pubby assault on *Good Golly Miss Molly*, their occasional weakness. John Fogerty growls his way through both the hits (*Fortunate Son* is especially charged) and a heroic call-and-response version of Nappy Brown's *Night Time Is The Right Time*, but perhaps the real revelation is how much of their power came from thunderous drummer Doug Clifford. What a phenomenon he was.

John Aizlewood

Epica

We Still Take You With Us

NUCLEAR BLAST

Lavish archive box set from guitar-shredding Lowlanders.

Marking 20 years since their debut album *The Phantom Agony*, Dutch symphonic metallers Epica are reissuing it in a handsome box set alongside early-2000s sequels *Consign To Oblivion* and *The Score*, plus a corset-bursting banquet of extra material. Here you can hear the gloriously overblown studio blueprints for even more preposterous live favourites such as *Cry For The Moon*, *Trois Vierges* and *Solitary Ground*.

For hard-core fans of the band, the main treasure here will be *Live At Paradiso*, a professionally shot concert and live album recorded in Amsterdam in 2006 but never before released, for unexplained reasons. Perhaps Epica were unhappy with this performance, which captures a relatively inexperienced young band attempting their signature Wagnerian spectacle on a fairly modest budget, and it does plod a little during some of the more Andrew Lloyd Webber-ish numbers. Even so, this is still a slickly shot and mostly excellent set featuring low-key pyrotechnics, topless fire-breathers and multiple prog-metal guests. Highlights include *Force Of The Shore*, which sounds like Rammstein covering Sparks, and a majestic *Quietus*, its

GETTY

thunderous sludge-metal waltz-core overlaid with dainty Celtic folk melodies that practically scream out for dwarves capering around a miniature Stonehenge.

In a universe beyond good taste, Epica rule forever.

Stephen Dalton

Neu!

50! GRÖNLAND

Hugely influential Krautrock icons mark their half-century with a lavish box set.

Despite releasing just three official albums during their short, combustible but intensely creative collaboration, seminal early-70s Krautrock duo Neu! (Michael Rother and Klaus Dinger) have helped shape the past five decades of avant-pop, noise-rock, post-punk and beyond. Squeezed into this lavishly packaged but compact five-disc box set are propulsive classics that clearly influenced Bowie and Eno, Joy Division and PiL, Blur and Stereolab, from shiny ambient blueprints such as *Im Glück* and *Leb' Wohl* to the proto-punk avant-primitivism of *Negativland* and *Hero*. Ideas come thick and fast, with almost every track sounding like its own sub-genre-in-waiting.

The key new material here is *NEU! Tribute*, a collection of remixes and remakes by The National, Mogwai, Idles and more. These eclectic make-overs are pleasingly irreverent and mostly excellent, and highlights include a lively disco-tronic demolition of *Hallogallo* by New Order's Stephen Morris and Gabe Gurney, Yann Tierson's deliciously squelchy robo-funk take on *Lieber Honig*, and the superbly named Guerrilla Toss transforming *Zum Herz* into a whooshing, shimmering electro-psych banger.

Also worth a fresh listen is *NEU! 86*, an unfinished reunion project which Dinger originally released with the title *NEU! 4* without Rother's consent, souring already strained relations between them. Only after Dinger's untimely death in 2008 did Rother assemble his own reworked, retitled version of the album. While the plastic synth-punk rant *Crazy* and punningly titled novelty Europop like *Dänzing* are hobbled by Dinger's clownish Keith Moon tendencies, time has been kinder to warm-blooded, Yello-ish synth-pop like *Wave Mother* and *Paradise Walk*. Outside the official canon of classics, but still an agreeably rich and charismatic racket.

Stephen Dalton

Marillion

Holidays In Eden PARLOPHONE

Bulked-out four-CD reissue of prog veterans' divisive 1992 album.

Holidays In Eden was Marillion's 'difficult second album' all over again. The honeymoon period following new singer Steve Hogarth's first album with them, 1989's *Seasons End*, was over. Strained writing sessions and a label that wanted these erstwhile prog standard-bearers to become the new Mike + The Mechanics resulted in an album that skewed closer to pop than they ever had before or would again, alienating older fans yet not bringing in enough newer fans to replace them.

This buffed and polished reissue doesn't re-frame the album as a lost classic, but it has aged well. The MOR pop-rock of *Dry Land* and *No One Can* sound less like the work of a band chasing chart positions and more that of musicians trying to carve out a new place in the world, while dramatic mood-piece opener *Splintering Heart* and closing triptych *This Town/The Rake's Progress/100 Nights* bridge what Marillion used to be and what they would become.

Three of the box set's four CDs are taken up with an impressive show from Hammersmith Odeon, with Hogarth in particular on confident form. "Shut up," he says after just one song, slapping down a heckler. That definitely wouldn't have happened with Mike + The Mechanics.

Dave Everley

Grateful Dead

In And Out Of The Garden: Madison Square Garden '81, '82, '83 RHINO

Garcia's mob take Manhattan.

Recorded during protracted sessions for 1987's *In The Dark* album, and including contemporary versions of their sardonic hit single *Touch Of Grey* plus the more incendiary *Throwing Stones* from that late renaissance, this 17-CD box set will set you back plenty in both money and time.

Well-loved and well-worn in New York City, their spiritual East Coast home, the Dead are seldom in a hurry, meaning *Estimated Prophet* and the Middle Eastern snake charm-spiced *Slipknot* and *Franklin's Tower* meander at length; *Spanish Jam* is positively tapas at under three minutes. What were they thinking?! It's mostly pluses, since Garcia's voice hadn't broken down yet, guitarist/vocalist Bob Weir remained a force of cowboy nature on *El Paso* and *Me And My Uncle*, and even Brent Mydland reins in his vocal excesses. The playing is stellar Dead, with the drum twins and Phil Lesh's bass cranked up tight.

Given that Dead fans probably know the material off pat, it's worth exploring the surprises in this collection. Their versions of offshoot group Kingfish's *Lazy Lightning* and *Supplication* are pick of the bunch, and the night draws in with a lumbering but oddly effective reading of The Beatles' *Revolution*.

It was forty years ago today, etc. Scary.

Max Bell

Joe Strummer

Joe Strummer 002: The Mescaleros Years

DARK HORSE

Former Clash man's vital history, 1999-2002

Back in the 90s, Johnny Cash took his music into the last stages of old age. The lesson was that you might keep your ferocity, grace and art until the very end.

Joe Strummer was paying attention. He had also decided to be a man in black, a folk archetype. And so he wrote Johnny a wonderful song called *The Road To Rock 'N' Roll*.

Cash was confused by the proposal, but the Strummer version is excellent. He was still writing well. His songs with the Mescaleros are braided with stoner jokes, moral rage and the dream of a transglobal resistance. Punk rock could ally with Algerian rai, dub reggae and campfire rave. All the good stuff would fit.

Clash fans were sometimes disappointed when Strummer released his first two albums with the Mescaleros. The music lacked the sense of angry theatre, and his new bandmates were less bothered about decent haircuts. But still there was subversion, romance and fun.

This new collection is timed to mark Strummer's 70th birthday. It assembles the albums with the posthumous *Streetcore* (2003), plus demos and stray recordings. Strummer's old notebooks provide instruction and comedic asides, richly packaged in this set.

Their first album, *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style* (1999) broke a 10-year gap in Strummer output. It included an experiment with Richard Norris of The Grid, called *Yalla Yalla*. This was mystical and profound. Not every track matched it, but the bar was high.

The second release, *Global A Go-Go* (2001) began with *Johnny Appleseed*, finalising the move from *White Riot* to green politics. Strummer signed off the record with the traditional *Minstrel Boy*, almost 18 minutes of spliffed-out rhapsody, accompanied on fiddle by old pal Tymon Dogg.

Some parts of *Streetcore* relied on guide vocals, Strummer's work completed after his passing in 2002. But still there was the visionary *Coma Girl*, putting fresh faith into outsider culture. Also, producer Rick Rubin spliced up Strummer and Johnny Cash in *Redemption Song*.

SHIGEO JONES KIKUCHI/PRESS

From the fourth set of bonus tracks, *Fantastic* is a swelling resolution to see in a new century. Strummer commits to a *'ramshackle parade'*, but sadly he would see little of it. Nevertheless, the music seems to resonate more than ever. Lost prophet Strummer must have known it would happen this way.

Stuart Bailie

Emerson Lake & Palmer

Singles BMG

Singles collection from a band who didn't really do singles but maybe should have.

At first glance it's hard to imagine less likely candidates for a lavish singles box set than Emerson Lake & Palmer. Yet here we are. *Singles* comprises 12 seven-inch singles, from 1972's tender Greg Lake ballad *Lucky Man* (a Top 20 hit in Holland) to the 1993 version of *I Believe In Father Christmas* re-recorded for the *The Return Of The Manticore* collection. They're packed into a sturdy box, they all have their original picture sleeve, and each is on different coloured vinyl. There are rather skimpy sleeve-notes, a briefer-still introduction from Carl Palmer, who informs us this was "an idea I had", and each sleeve is re-presented as a seven-inch art print, so those who have long-desired a picture of the ELP-as-Bee-Gees *Love Beach* sleeve, which graced the splendid single version of Joaquin Rodrigo's *Canario*, need desire no more.

Since ELP didn't really do singles, the compilers have been creative, so global releases were trawled. The Japanese version of *Stones Of Years* manages to get the song title wrong, but, splendidly, *From The Beginning* was an Angolan release, although what the upstanding folk of Luanda made of Lake's plaintive, mostly acoustic strum must remain a mystery. Meanwhile, the US promo version of the clattering *Brain Salad Surgery* makes the cut. There's a small amount of repetition. It's all very pointless and rather wonderful.

There are no surprises, just reminders. ELP's stentorian, keyboards-crazed version of *Jerusalem* was unquestionably ahead of its time, *C'Est La Vie* had all the makings of a standard-in-waiting, and was the peak of the Lake/Pete Sinfield writing partnership beyond *I Believe In Father Christmas*, which by 1993 had been stripped of most of its Christmas trimmings and sounded both better and more bitter.

Towering above everything, of course, is their version of Aaron Copland's *Fanfare For The Common Man*, astonishingly a No.22 hit in the UK. Cut for radio friendliness from the nearly 10 minutes found on *Works Volume 1*, it was a remarkable display of three-way musical virtuosity and gladiatorial power, albeit one best enjoyed via the video shot in the deserted Montreal Olympic Stadium in the middle of a snowy Canadian winter. It was also, as all great singles should be, impossibly catchy.

So, if ELP truly weren't a singles act, then *Singles* adds nothing. It does, of course, add something: Emerson Lake & Palmer could have been a singles act. If they'd wanted to be.

John Aizlewood

The Wedding Present

The 30th Anniversary Of The Hit Parade SONY LEGACY

Indie-rock history is made by unexpected thrill-pop hitmakers.

Following their intoxicating grunge-noir masterpiece *Seamonsters*, produced by Steve Albini, in 1991 Leeds indie pioneers The Wedding Present took a brighter – yet no less cult-like – approach to 1992. Releasing a 15,000-edition single every month, each backed with a cover, their Hit Parade project equalled Elvis Presley's record for UK Top 40 hits per annum and delivered arguably the greatest collection of alt.pop tunes of the era. They are now reissued in a double-album anniversary set.

From the scorched-earth riff-pop thrill of January's *Blue Eyes* to December's grimiest ever Christmas single *No Christmas*, The Hit Parade stands as testament to the broad vision and songwriting mastery of David Gedge. *Three* is a breezy entreaty for a ménage à trois adorned with an entrancing sitar solo; *Come Play With Me* a heart-wrenching break-up confessional that seems to pirouette its way to a jubilant, redemptive finale; *Love Slave* a grinding yet euphoric ode to S&M. Full-throttle indie rockers like *Go-Go Dancer*, *Silver Shorts* and *The Queen Of Outer Space* are among the finest of the formative period, and there's no let-up on the covers either: The Monkees' *Pleasant Valley Sunday*, Bow Wow Wow's *Go Wild In The Country* and Elton's *Step Into Christmas* become ferocious fun in these feral pop hands. Every one a smash.

Mark Beaumont

Jellyfish

When These Memories Fade NEW LAND +

49 inches of pop-rock heaven.

Jellyfish are renowned for the two landmark albums they released in the early 90s before sadly falling to bits, and *WTMF* does a very fine job of celebrating the band's enduring legacy through the medium of seven remastered seven-inch singles – on multi-coloured vinyl, no less, if you're lucky enough to nab one of the initial 1,000 limited-edition units. If not, you'll have to make do with bog-standard black plastic for the second edition. Suffice to say from first single *The King Is Half Undressed* through to a live version of Badfinger's *No Matter What* backed with a take on Harry Nilsson's *Think About Your Troubles* (Jellyfish's final studio recording) on a special covers seven-incher exclusive to this set, all the tracks are superb. Most of debut album *Bellybutton* is spread across the first four seven-inchers, while the genius songwriting and wordplay goes to a whole new level on *The Ghost At Number One* and *New Mistake*, both from follow-up *Spilt Milk*.

And then there's the other stuff, most important of which is an excellent 64-page booklet featuring track-by-track analysis from Jason Falkner and Roger Manning Jr, among others, and an extensive singles discography. These memories will never fade.

Essi Berelian

Nelson

Greatest Hits (And Near Misses) UNIVERSAL MUSIC ENTERPRISES

Timotei twins revisited.

When in 1977 *Blue Peter* presenter John Noakes scaled the height of Nelson's Column, seemingly using only his bare hands and some sticky-backed plastic, we all reeled in awestruck admiration. A similar event occurred in 1990 when Matthew and Gunnar Nelson released their debut album. Our wonderment wasn't so much inspired by the duo's music (or column-clambering capabilities) as by their jaw-dropping hair: cascading, leonine blond locks that reduced previously lauded coiffures – Plant, Gorham, Coverdale, Fawcett – to the level of Bobby Charlton comb-overs.

This compilation collects songs from Nelson's two full-length albums for Geffen – the double-platinum *After The Rain* and 1995 follow-up *Because They Can* – plus tracks from lesser-known releases *Lightning Strikes Twice*, *Life*, *The Silence Is Broken* and *Peace Out*. Tellingly, there's nothing from *Imaginator*, a bizarre concept piece that scuppered their Geffen deal.

Nelson's music is AOR to the core – or at least to the syrupy centre of the donut – although perhaps a trifle less polished than one remembers. Their biggest

GETTY/PRESS

hit, *(Can't Live Without Your) Love And Affection*, a US No.1, takes centre stage, but to these ears *After The Rain* (the song) beats it hands down, a triumph of pink-eyed lachrymosity.

Geoff Barton

Can

Live In Cuxhaven 1976

MUTE/SPOON

Krautrock pioneers/greats on top live form.

This is the third in a series of live Can albums from the 70s being released by Mute/Spoon, recorded back when the hugely influential Krautrock band were at the height of their considerable jam/groove live powers, and all three are stunning and startlingly different from one another. As Can biographer Pascal Bussy puts it, it was "one [of those] evenings where all the positive waves culminate in one same moment of grace, thanks to a collective inspiration and a certain amount of witchcraft".

The relatively short (30-minute) *Live In Cuxhaven 1976* follows Can *Live In Stuttgart 1975* (rightly acclaimed almost everywhere as the reissue of 2021), and comprises four pieces, mostly instrumental – *Eins, Zwei, Drei* and *Vier*. *Eins* is low-key: introductory, searching, questing, hypnotic and malleable in its upbeat groove. *Zwei* is more experimental, playful: noodling and nudging the instruments along in stages, the players locking and double locking before briefly venturing out on their own explorations. Utterly mesmeric. *Drei* is propulsive, the band in full flight, unfettered by any worldly concerns. *Vier* is a solid, solid-gone groove, Can back into sonic meltdown mode.

Another electrifying live retrospective from one of the greatest bands ever.

Everett True

Man

Life On The Road – On Air 1972-1983 ESOTERIC

Man alive.

Welsh warriors Man were the missing link between pub rock and space rock, not least because their musical speciality – extended, meandering, seemingly random-sounding jams – often sent critics into a dark-red rage. In many ways the band were the Cymru equivalent of the Grateful Dead or Quicksilver Messenger Service. So to fans it was likely manna (pun intended) from heaven when QMS guitarist John Cipollina guested on Man's 1975 album *Maximum Darkness*.

This box set comprises four CDs and two DVDs, gathering together surviving UK radio and TV sessions recorded for the BBC and others. There are no fewer than three versions of convoluted anthem *Many Are Called But Few Get Up*, plus a brace of epic renditions of the equally twisty-turny *Spunk Rock*; enough to send non-aficionados into a deep slumber. (Less *Men Of Harlech*, more Men Of Horlicks, you could say.) Nevertheless, Man's intuitive playing shines through, along with a wicked, dope-stoked sense of humour – who can resist tracks with titles such as *A Night In Dad's Bag* or *The Brazilian Cucumber Meets Deke's New Nose* (referencing their guitarist Deke Leonard)?

Postscript: much to this writer's surprise, despite the deaths of numerous key members, a version of the Man band still exists in Germany. Ramble on!

Geoff Barton

Van Der Graaf Generator

Interference Patterns

CHERRY RED

12-disc box collects post-reunion output since 2005.

Van Der Graaf Generator were always the prog act that even progophobes were allowed to like, and since their re-formation in 2004 they've shown why, rekindling an artful avant-rock style in potent new material.

Across 12 discs, this box set brings together the five studio albums they've released since then, 2007's *Live At The Paradiso* from a show in Amsterdam and 2015's *Merlin Atmos* live album from their 2013 tour.

Peter Hammill's perennially portentous vocal delivery and David Jackson's spidery sax bring tracks such as *Nutter Alert* thrillingly to life. And although Jackson left after VDGG's first reunion album, leaving a rump of Hammill, Hugh Banton and Guy Evans, the quality doesn't wane on later albums, even when Mr H takes a back seat for the experimental, instrumental *ALT* (2012).

The likes of the shape-shifting, punky *Embarrassing Kid* (from 2011's *A Grounding In Numbers*) and 2008's head-spinning, Crimson-esque *Interference Patterns*, which gives this box set its name, would sit proudly on their 70s albums, while the live material shows just what a charismatic frontman Hammill is, able to bring the show down to a whisper and up to a howling crescendo at will.

Long may they interfere.

Johnny Sharp

Pentangle

Through The Ages (1984-1995) CHERRY RED

Six-CD box set featuring bonus BBC session and live out-takes.

In the 1980s, Pentangle reunited with all their original members except John Renbourn. Of the albums they made over the subsequent 10 years, 1984's *Open The Door* is the best. Danny Thompson's bass brings a woozy, jazzy undertow, reminiscent of his work with John Martyn, the intricate interplay between guitarist Bert Jansch and guitarist/violinist Mike Piggott is impeccable, and Jacqui McShee's vocals are a constant thing of beauty. There's a magnificent disregard for the sonic fashions of the 80s.

Thompson left, and was replaced by Nigel Portman-Smith on 1986's *In The Round*, and there's a shift towards a more 80s-friendly flanged bass sound that feels more dated, as is the heavy-handed, Phil Collins-esque drumming of Gerry Conway.

There is still grace and guile on subsequent albums like *So Early In The Spring*, but an increased need to feel contemporary in production can have an occasional spoiling effect, as is also the case with 1991's slightly rockier *Think Of Tomorrow*.

By 1993 and *One More Road*, only McShee and Jansch were left from the original line-up, and they were still capable of greatness, as on *Oxford City*. Finally there's *Live 1994*, with McShee delivering a pearl-like a-cappella *When I Was In My Prime*. When was she not?

David Stubbs

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Secret Affair

So Cool: The Very Best Of EDSEL

Of all the non-2 Tone '79 mod revivalists, Secret Affair were the most artistically ambitious, which only seemed to irritate the contemporary media, and this 34-track double set (*Glory Boys, My World*, debut hit *Time For Action* et al) retains a timeless verve and swagger. **7/10**

Eddie And The Hot Rods

The Singles 1976-1985 CAPTAIN OI!

Now this, or at least half of it, is essential. What happened between Dr Feelgood and the Sex Pistols? This. Maximum R&B at The Marquee for a whole new generation. *Teenage Depression. Live At The Sound Of Speed* EP. *Do Anything You Wanna Do*. You need this. **9/10**

Abrasive Wheels

1981-1984 CAPTAIN OI!

Like most *Punk And Disorderly*-era bands Leeds quartet Abrasive Wheels call to mind Slaughter And The Dogs after too many espressos. There are two LPs, attendant singles and more on two CDs. They slept on my floor in April '83 and were surprisingly tidy. **7/10**

Various

1980: Brand New Rage CAPTAIN OI!

Hearing punk luddites (Anti-Establishment) alongside the new decade's progressive post-punks (Adam & The Ants) is a bit like watching Neanderthals taking on homo sapiens in an inventing-the-wheel contest. Sadly, these three CDs feature more of the former than the latter. **6/10**

Sons Of Adam

Saturday's Sons: The Complete Recordings HIGH NOON

Irredeemable Anglophiles Sons Of Adam were a big deal (as a support) in mid-60s LA. Future Blue Cheer guitarist Randy Holden features, and they released some neat seven-inchers, but as a 1966 support Avalon show proves, they weren't the ace live band history claims. **6/10**

Various

Garage Psychedelique (Best Of Garage Psych 1965-2019)

TWO-PIERS

An excellent multi-generational collation of quality monoxide-fuelled psych that, over four sides of vinyl, pulls together key recordings from influencers (Count Five, Sonics, Squires, MC5) and influenced (The Hives, Oh Sees, Pond, Moon Duo, Tame Impala) alike. Trippy. **8/10**

Supergrass

Supergrass (Deluxe Expanded Ed.) BMG

There was always a glam rock exuberance about Supergrass which was in many ways their best quality. If *In It For Their Money* was their T.Rex album, the self-titled 'X-ray Album' occasionally borders on Bowie. An overlooked gem, veritably bloated with extras. **8/10**

Various

High In The Morning: Prog Pop Of '73 GRAPEFRUIT

For old lags this three-CD set is an irresistible trip down memory lane, for curious neophytes a priceless voyage of discovery. Come for Mott's *Memphis*, Manfred's *Joybringer*, SAHB's *Swampsnake* and Quo's *Caroline* and stay for Kevin Coyne's *Marlene*. An utter delight. **9/10**

Misty

Here Again GRAPEFRUIT

Classically inspired organ-led proggers Misty were managed by Michael Grade, who sold them hard and dropped them fast. Unsurprising, really, as they sound positively archaic by comparison to their Zep/Crimson contemporaries on this previously unreleased 1969 LP. **6/10**

Status Quo

Quo'ing In: Best Of The Noughties EARMUSIC

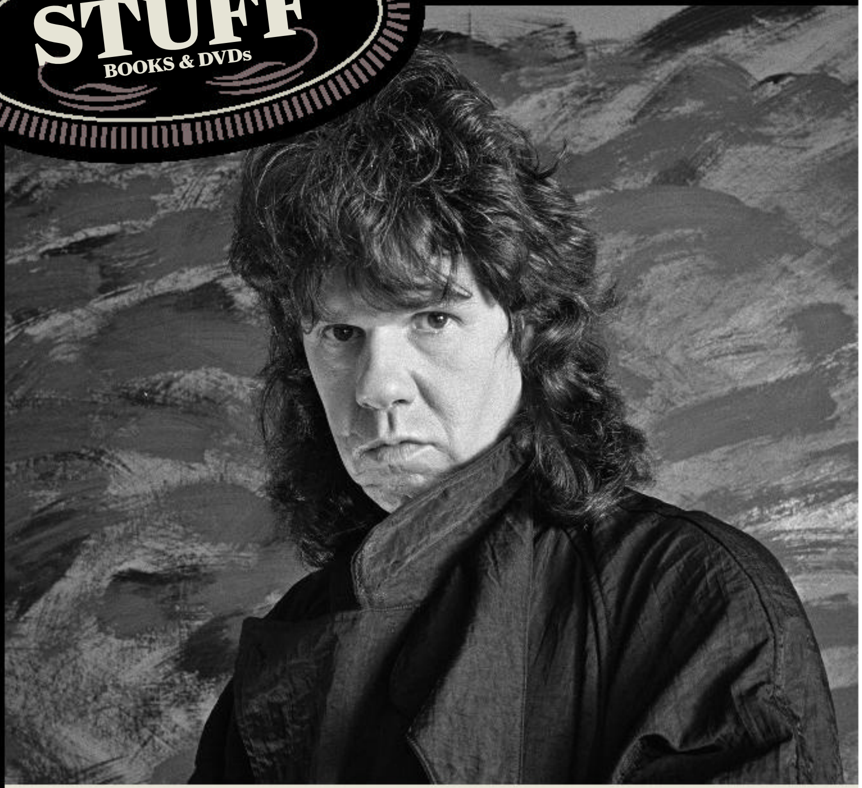
Four songs in, there's a 2010 re-recording of *In The Army Now*. And a version of *Raining In My Heart* with Brian May. There's even a 2022 retread of *Paper Plane*. Quo need to show more confidence in their second century here; 35 tracks and no *Heavy Traffic*? Ludicrous. **6/10**

The Mutants

Curse Of The Easily Amused LIBERATION HALL

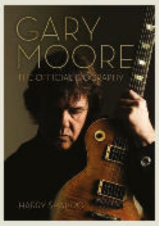
1977 vintage San Francisco punks The Mutants should be great. You want them to be great. But like so many West Coast punk bands of their era, they just sound unconvincing. Like a band who saw photos of the Sex Pistols and fancied having a go. Great name, though. **4/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM



Gary Moore: The Official Biography

Harry Shapiro *JAWBONE PRESS*



Belfast guitarist's full and frank history.

Gary Moore was 58 when he died of lifestyle-related causes in 2011. He has been remembered with tribute gigs, posthumous releases and TV specials, but a balanced overview of his ever-twisting career has been lacking. Was he essentially a rocker, a blues guy, a Celtic sound shaker, or some other variation?

This official biography aims to put a discernible shape to the life. We learn more about the Fleetwood Mac connection and the early mentorship of Peter Green. There are meetings with George Harrison, a couple of Sex Pistols, Albert King and BB King, and a band with Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker. Sparks fly and substantial music is created.

Moore had memorable collisions with Thin Lizzy, notably on the *Black Rose* album in 1979, when he brought vigour and focus to a band that was beginning to struggle. He had previously replaced Eric Bell in Lizzy in 1974, and then played live with them in 1978, before self-ejecting in mid-tour.

Moore's relationship with Phil Lynott goes back to the late 60s and their tenure in the Irish band Skid Row. Moore was 16 and determined to make a life beyond his dysfunctional, violent home in east Belfast. Lynott, of course, had his own family challenges. And so the pair kept fractious company. Moore's slow blues version of *Don't Believe A Word* is arguably the more convincing one. Without him, *Still In Love With You* would not have featured that intense ache.

Parisian Walkways was a half-secret homage to Lynott's father, Cecil Parris. There was another coded exchange in the Lizzy song *Romeo And The Lonely Girl*, in the line: *'For all his good looks there were scars that he took.'* 'Romeo' is an anagram of 'Moore', and the scars on the guitarist's face were apparently caused by a smashed beer glass shoved into it in a West London bar.

Author Harry Shapiro gives a sensitive, composed view of Moore's life. There is space for Colosseum II, and the early beat years in Ireland. Moore suffers from anxiety and lacks confidence. We get to read about the many dalliances, the break-ups and the boozing. His final days seem dismal and the cause of death is obtuse.

Yet there's a great spike of validation in the book when Moore returns to the source of his music on *Still Got The Blues* in 1990. He plays beautifully and sings so well. The guest players respond in part and three million customers see the value in it. The music still matters and that sense of loss is painfully recalled.

Stuart Bailie

Big Big Train

Summer Shall Not Fade

ENGLISH ELECTRIC RECORDINGS

The modern-prog greats' triumphant festival headline slot of 2018.

In July 2018, British proggers Big Big Train headlined the Night Of The Prog festival in Loreley, Germany, in a beautiful natural amphitheatre on the banks of the Rhine. It was a picturesque setting for what remains the band's biggest show to date, and this nicely packaged Blu-ray/two-CD release captures that career zenith show in classy style.

Drummer Nick D'Virgilio, guitarist/keyboard player Rikard Sjöblom and violinist Rachel Hall are particularly eye-catching performers, multi-tasking with ease over a two-hour set including *The First Rebreather*, *A Mead Hall In Winter* and *Summer's Lease*. BBT's trademark brass section make a notable impression, the atmosphere is enhanced by some top-end lighting and big-screen visuals, and some clever split-screen moments show band members in close-up, digging deep behind frontman David Longdon.

It's a bittersweet joy to see the now-late singer owning this crowd, getting them swaying gleefully in time and singing along, and throwing himself into demanding songs like *Brave Captain* and *East Coast Racer* with dramatic flair and vocal prowess.

Longdon is sadly gone, and there are others no longer in the band, but what a moment they shared. A magnificent, moving must-watch.

Grant Moon

Loud: A Life In Rock 'N' Roll By The World's First Female Roadie

Tana Douglas *HARPERCOLLINS*

All the world's a stage.

Tana Douglas was 16 when she got her first job as a roadie for AC/DC, four decades or so before the #metoo movement.

The names that spill out from this raucous, loving tale of being a woman in a overwhelmingly man's world are stunning – Deep Purple, Status Quo, Mick Jagger, drinking shots with Bon Scott backstage at Wembley, Elton John, Ozzy and Sharon, climbing rigs while seven months pregnant, one hell of a Patti Smith story… What comes across mainly in this hectic, non-stop badinage of booze, broads and back lines is how much love the author has for her craft and for the rock'n'roll myth and industry that has shaped her life. This is a world where the tour itinerary is the bible, and where drunken shenanigans demand respect, but not as much as professionalism and doing the job. Respect.

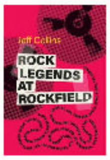
Everett True

Rock Legends At Rockfield

Jeff Collins

UNIVERSITY OF WALES PRESS

Legendary Welsh studio's star-studded story.



After pitching Rockfield as a feature to this very magazine, Hard Rock Hell Radio DJ Jeff Collins soon realised how deeply the South Wales farm that doubled as the world's first residential studio figured in rock history.

After opening in 1963, named Rockfield after a local village, the idyllic Monmouthshire complex hosted Sabbath recording *Paranoid*, 20 Hawkwind lift-offs, Queen records including *Bohemian Rhapsody*, Robert Plant's first solo records, Rush's *Farewell To Kings*, Judas Priest, Iggy Pop, Oasis and many more. "Motorhead were born at Rockfield," Lemmy said, referring to 1975's birth-pang sessions.

For a story begging to be told, Collins does a thorough job, recounting vividly Rockfield's legacy, and session antics from food fights to fisticuffs, and includes interviews including Plant reuniting with band members, Lemmy, Geddy Lee, Dave Brock, Budgie, The Darkness producers, roadies and many more.

Kris Needs

Verse, Chorus, Monster!

Graham Coxon *FABER*

Guitarist's blurred recollection of art, anxiety and addiction.

Ex-'army kid' Coxon (his bandsman father served in West Germany prior to settling in Colchester) tells his self-aware, self-analytical tale with a disarming, unfiltered honesty, revealing an innate insecurity

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and a penchant for alcoholic self-medication that's as far from the accepted model of unreconstructed rock over-indulgence as it's possible to get while remaining drunk and insensible. The usual nostalgic recollection of 70s childhood and character-building teenage awkwardness (he finds solace in art and a broad sweep of music, unsurprisingly) precedes a pivotal meeting with school pal Damon Albarn, who initially insults his shoes before ultimately ascertaining that he's musically useful. Young Albarn, it turns out, is the sort of cocky adolescent who regularly has '666' felt-penned on his face by skinheads. Who would have guessed?

Self-consciously feminist, Coxon is an entertaining, self-deprecating narrator who in successive sentences reveals that he's "one of those people… who can't avoid noticing the resemblance of [a] dog's bumhole to a sausage roll", before musing, without a hint of irony, that he "could never approach [his] hardships like Mexican artist Frida Kahlo".

There's also vintage motorcycles in here, the inside story of Britpop, alternative folk-guitar tunings, a Camden basement birthing pool, a chain of failed relationships, 12 steps, the joys of fatherhood, and urban skateboarding.

It's a bizarrely engaging read. Not exactly *The Dirt*, but in its way equally riveting.

Ian Fortnam

Fingers Crossed: How Music Saved Me From Success

Miki Berenyi NINE EIGHT BOOKS

Brilliant storytelling of a crazy life from the Lush frontwoman.

In most musicians' memoirs, the meat of the story really kicks in only when they get on the road with their first band. But not in Miki Berenyi's case. The Lush frontwoman's chaotic, sometimes traumatic childhood, spent bouncing between time with her glamorous Japanese mother, an actress, and her feckless, philandering Hungarian father, saw her literally screaming for attention, wrestling with mental health problems and suffering sexual and emotional abuse at the hands of her loathed Nazi grandmother.

None of this is presented with an ounce of self-pity, however. Berenyi writes beautifully, with soul and humour, and goes on to perfectly encapsulate pop fandom, complicated female friendships – not least with her eventual bandmate Emma Anderson – the thrill of early tours in a crappy van and the horror of losing her friend and bandmate Chris Acland to suicide, while her insider view of Lollapalooza and Britpop drags the reader right into the heart of the 90s rock scene.

Fingers Crossed: How Music Saved Me From Success is a brilliant and engaging read.

Emma Johnston

Totally Wired: The Rise And Fall Of The Music Press

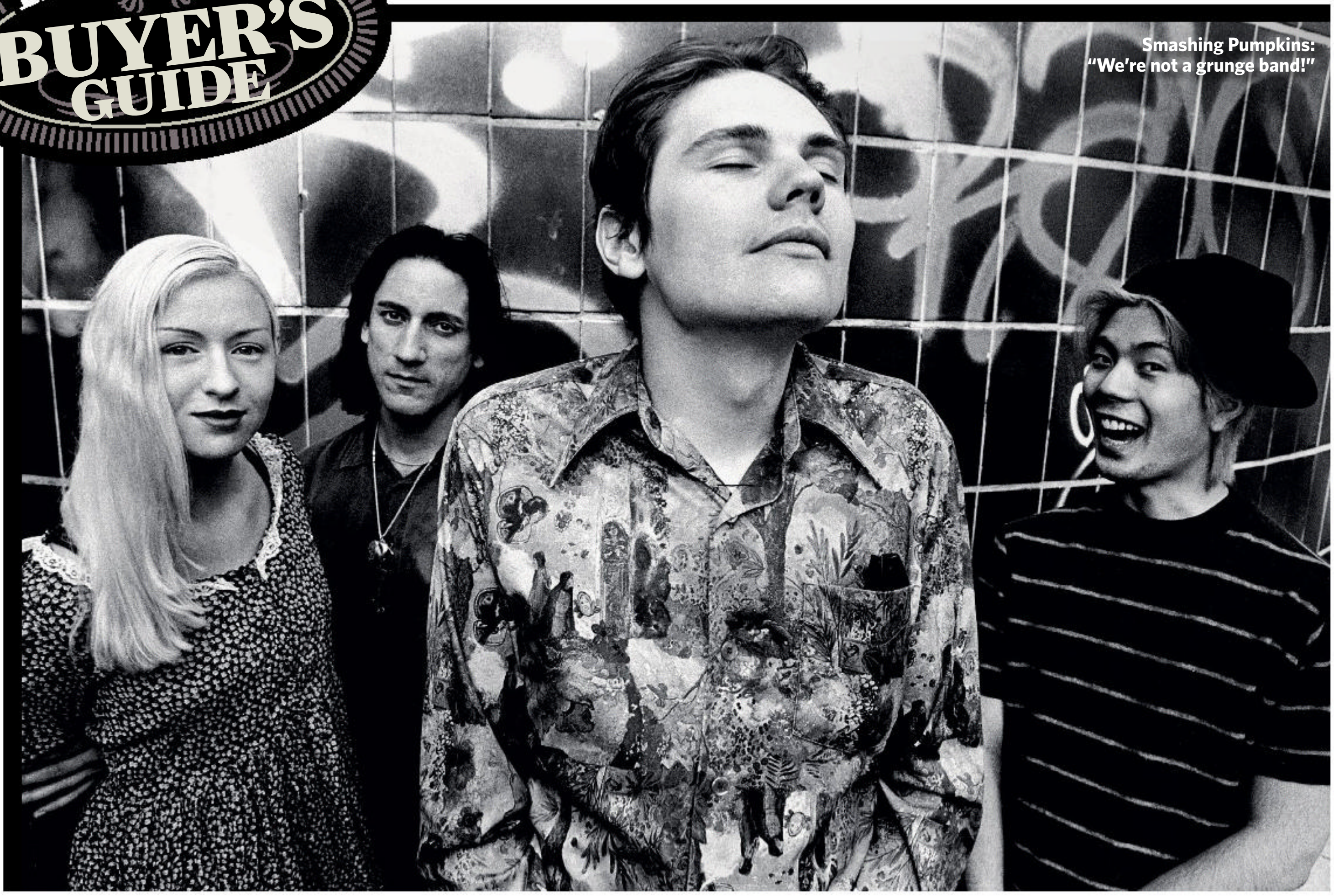
Paul Gorman THAMES & HUDSON

Skewed history of the pop media.

Twenty-one years ago, Malcolm McLaren biographer Paul Gorman published his *In Their Own Write: Adventures In The Music Press*, which aside from a brief introduction from the author was an oral history of the rock media from the 1952 birth of *NME* to the 2001 death of *Melody Maker*.

Now comes *Totally Wired*, a fleshed-out, written-through version with an additional preparatory chapter on the origins of the music press and a sketchy epilogue covering the last two decades (unworthy of the volume's core content – up until the mid-90s where it falls off a bit of a cliff), that merely serves as a premature epitaph to a rock/pop media that's evidently still here. Obviously, the music press has always been driven by snobbery and subjectivity, and *Totally Wired* is no exception. While *Kerrang!*'s earliest incarnation gets a cursory page or so, *Metal Hammer, Classic Rock, Prog, Louder, Rock Sound, Fireworks, Rock Candy* et al simply don't exist. The rock/metal media is an inconvenient truth that's been effectively written out of history because what? It's not 'cool' enough? Its prejudicial exclusion is particularly ironic, as Gorman's enduring bugbear throughout *Totally Wired* is the exclusion of journalists of colour and, particularly, women. *Classic Rock* and *Metal Hammer* are both edited by women. Just saying.

Ian Fortnam



Smashing Pumpkins: "We're not a grunge band!"

GETTY

The Smashing Pumpkins

With albums that were at times sublime, at times challenging, at their best the band cooked up some delicious musical flavours.

After three decades, Smashing Pumpkins leader Billy Corgan still has a message for music fans who insist on labelling the four-piece a grunge band. On the band's TikTok account, a post read: "A fact that people can't accept? SP is not grünge, has never been grunge, not against grunge, but SP ain't it."

Got that? Good.

Forming in his native Chicago after a teenage stint in Florida with goth rockers The Marked and Deep Blue Dream (with future Static-X frontman the late Wayne Static), Smashing Pumpkins were somehow lumped in with the burgeoning grunge scene following the release of their 1991 debut album *Gish*. The artier cousins of their Seattle contemporaries, Corgan's band – completed by bassist D'Arcy Wretzky, guitarist James Iha and drummer Jimmy Chamberlin – proudly wore many influences on their sleeve: goth, psychedelia, shoegaze, metal and, later, electronica.

Fronting a band dogged by rumours of in-fighting and drug addictions, Corgan earned the reputation of being a benevolent dictator – one who doesn't mince his words, at that – after it emerged that he overdubbed the majority of Wretzky and Iha's takes on *Gish* and breakthrough follow-up *Siamese Dream*.

"You know, I gave them a year and a half to prepare for this record," Corgan told *Spin* in 1993. "I'm surrounded by these people who I care about very much, yet they continue to keep failing me."

Producer Butch Vig later confirmed that the frontman re-recorded "ninety per cent" of the album himself.

Siamese Dream and the ambitious *Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness* made the band alt.rock superstars, but a string of unfortunate events – a drug overdose, death and divorce – shaped the electronica-influenced album *Adore* and marked a downturn in the band's popularity.

While they never again scaled the heights of their mid-90s era, Corgan – who was at one time the sole original member of the band before a partial reunion (minus Wretzky) in 2018 – has continued to evolve his music idea and band's sound across 11 often disparate studio albums.

The Smashing Pumpkins discography is by turns sublime and challenging, but never, ever boring. And as one of rock's more prolific songwriters, Corgan shows no sign of slowing down.

Simon Young

Essential Classics

Siamese Dream

VIRGIN, 1993

Smashing Pumpkins were in a mess when it came to recording their second album. Chamberlain was addicted to heroin, Wretzky and Iha had broken up, and Corgan, who was in the grip of a dark, depressive episode, was tasked with delivering an album that would nudge them into the commercial realm of Nirvana's *Nevermind*.

After writing *Today*, Corgan eventually tapped in to a rich seam of creativity. His pursuit of perfection came at a personal cost – he overdubbed most of his bandmates' parts – and later revealed that his work ethic ruined relationships and his mental health. That said, *Siamese Dream* is a perfect album.

Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness

VIRGIN, 1995

After the alt.rock excellence of *Siamese Dream*, Corgan's writer's block was a dot in the rear-view mirror. His next trick was to create something even more grandiose: a 28-track double album that runs the gamut of disparate styles and rarely buckles under the weight of its ambition. With producers Flood and Alan Moulder and creative contributions – gasp – *welcomed* by their frontman, this album teems with perfection: *Tonight, Tonight*, *Bullet With Butterfly Wings*, *1979* and *Zero* at the very least deserve a place in any essential 90s alt.rock time capsule. A masterpiece.

Superior Reputation cementing

Gish

CAROLINE/HUT, 1991

Gish was released just four months before Nirvana's *Nevermind* detonated the musical landscape, and the Pumpkins were perhaps unfairly tagged as a grunge band. As evidenced on this, their debut album, they were much more than that.

Helped by Butch Vig's pristine, punchy production, the band fused stadium-sized choruses, inward-facing shoe-gaze, Sabbath-sized riffs and psychedelic rock to create a mesmeric listening experience. The album boasts many standout moments – the swaggering *Siva*, the quiet-loud master class of *Snail* – that would inform follow-up *Siamese Dream*.

Adore

VIRGIN, 1998

By the mid-90s, the Pumpkins were on a steep upward trajectory. But the following summer, Chamberlin and touring keyboard player Jonathan Melvoin both overdosed. While Chamberlin recovered, Melvoin was not as fortunate. Chamberlin was dismissed and the band remained a three-piece as they began work on *Adore*.

Corgan was consumed by grief after the loss of his mother and the end of his marriage, and *Adore* is an interesting meditation on loss. At turns glowering and sombre, it leaned heavily into electronica territory and divided many fans who were expecting a sequel to *Mellon Collie*.

Machina/The Machines Of God

VIRGIN, 2000

Machina was supposed to be Smashing Pumpkins' final album. In fact, Corgan had envisioned a double album based on a convoluted story. Their label, burned by the lukewarm response to *Adore*, released a hefty 15-tracker instead.

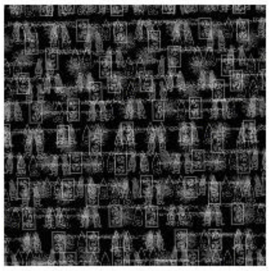
Reinstating Chamberlin proved to be an astute decision; his masterful drumming, missed on *Adore*, injected a powerful energy. With songs pitched somewhere between *Mellon Collie* and *Adore*, the album is one of light and shade. Snarling opener *The Everlasting Gaze* and the uplifting *Stand Inside Your Love* remain career highlights.

Oceania

MARTHA'S MUSIC, 2012

Described by Corgan as an "album within an album", and using a sizeable chunk of the abandoned *Teargarden* project, *Oceania* is the only Pumpkins album with bassist Nicole Fiorentino and drummer Mike Byrne, and the second with guitarist Jeff Schroeder. It's a shame this line-up was fleeting, as there's a familiar chemistry which recalls the energy that propelled *Siamese Dream*. Highlights include the heavy clatter of the muscular *Quasar* and *Panopticon*, the dreamlike *Pinwheels* and the Queen-esque pageantry of *The Chimera*. After 2007's disappointing *Zeitgeist*, *Oceania* was a return to form.

Good Worth exploring



Machina II/The Friends & Enemies Of Modern Music

CONSTANTINOPLE, 2000

These songs – or at least the majority of them – were supposed to feature on the original *Machina/The Machines Of God*. In a deliciously petty move, Corgan had 25 copies pressed on vinyl and sent out, with instructions to distribute it for free on the internet.

The final album by the original line-up, it kicks off with the brash, snotty one-two of *Glass* and *Cash Car Star* and the thunderous *Dross*. Elsewhere, the pace lessens on the chiming *Let Me Give the World To You* and the dreamlike fuzz-pop of *Go*. *Machina II* almost betters its predecessor. Almost.

Shiny And Oh So Bright, Vol. 1

NAPALM, 2018

The songs on this 2018 release – the band's tenth full-length album – were originally intended to be released as two separate EPs. Produced by Rick Rubin – and the first Pumpkins album recorded with James Iha since 2000 – it certainly has its moments: first single *Solara* echoes the heavier moments on *Siamese Dream*, *Knights Of Malta* dips its toes into psychedelic gospel pop, and *Silvery Sometimes (Ghosts)* is classic Pumpkins. But the album drags in places, too (hang your head in shame, *Travels*). The main criticism, however, is that at 31 minutes or so the album is frustratingly short.

Cyr

SUMERIAN, 2020

Where *Shiny And Oh So Bright* was something of a snack, *Cyr* offers repeated visits to the buffet table. With 20 songs and a running time of 72-minutes, this self-produced collection, Smashing Pumpkins' eleventh full-length album, allowed Corgan to stretch out and explore new ground. Working with Logic music software, he leans heavily on a synth-pop sound on the 80s-flavoured title track, *Anno Satana*, *Ramona* and the sinister pop of *Wyttch*. The lack of alt.rock riffs on the record will surprise – or alarm – the casual Pumpkins fan, but die-hards have long accepted that Corgan is not the sort to dwell on one idea for too long.

Avoid

Zeitgeist

MARTHA'S MUSIC/REPRISE, 2007

After his short-lived Zwan supergroup, Corgan reunited Smashing Pumpkins. Well, in name alone; only Corgan and Chamberlin were involved in the making of their seventh studio album. With Terry Date and Roy Thomas Baker sharing production with the duo, the tracks on *Zeitgeist* certainly sound like the Smashing Pumpkins, albeit on autopilot. There are some decent moments – single *Doomsday Clock* boasts a strong riff, while *Tarantula* has psychedelic touches that echo the bluster of the band's earlier records – but taken overall it's the one Smashing Pumpkins album you really don't need in your collection.

Essential Playlist

Rhinoceros
Gish

Siva
Gish

Cherub Rock
Siamese Dream

Today
Siamese Dream

Rocket
Siamese Dream

Disarm
Siamese Dream

Geek USA
Siamese Dream

Tonight, Tonight
Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness

Zero
Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness

Bullet With Butterfly Wings
Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness

1979
Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness

Ava Adore
Adore

Stand Inside Your Love
Machina/The Machines Of God

Dross
Machina II/The Friends & Enemies Of Modern Music

Glass
Machina II/The Friends & Enemies Of Modern Music

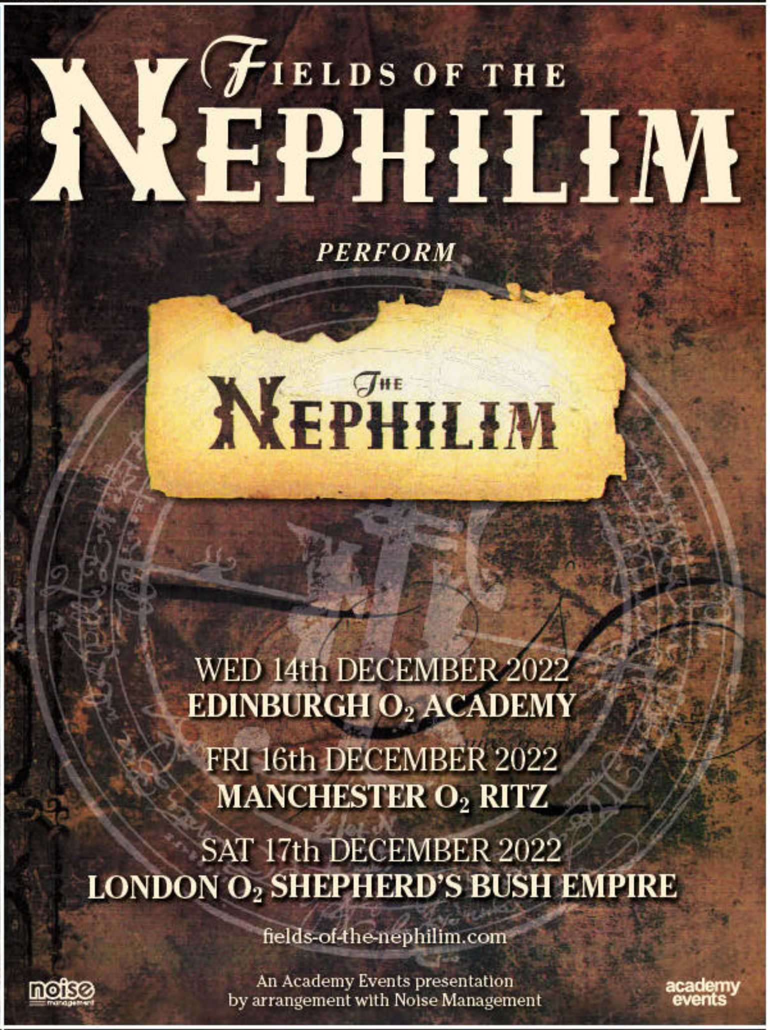
Quasar
Oceania

Drum + Fife
Monuments To An Elegy

Solara
Shiny And Oh So Bright, Vol. 1 / LP: No Past. No Future. No Sun.

Wyttch
Cyr

Academy Events present



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BACK TO LIVE

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

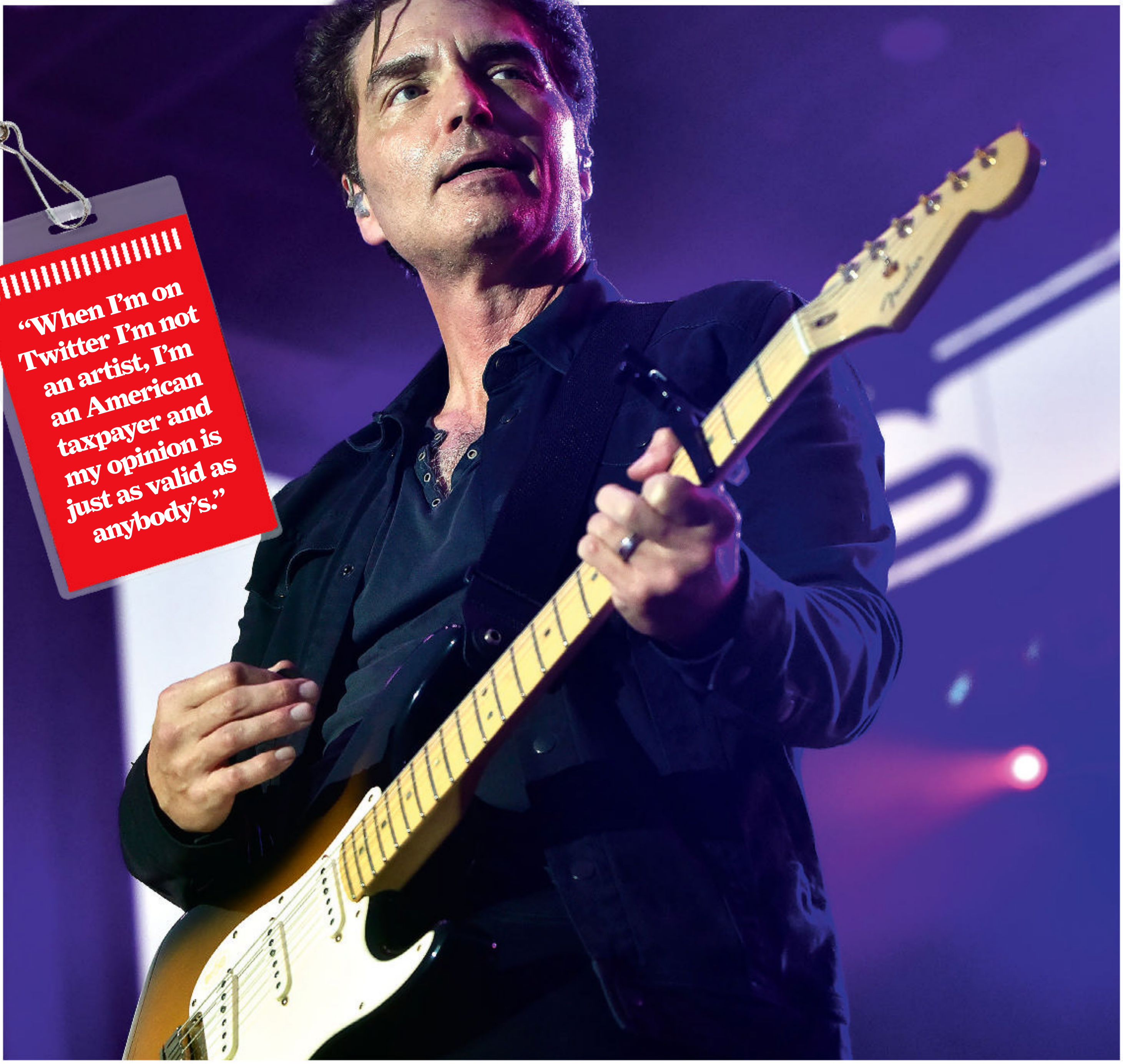
P92 Interviews
P97 Tour Dates
P103 Live Reviews

P105

Cropredy Convention

Rosalie Cunningham's 70s prog, psych and folk tunes are among the delights when the Fairports' festival makes its post-covid return.

GETTY



"When I'm on Twitter I'm not an artist, I'm an American taxpayer and my opinion is just as valid as anybody's."

Richard Marx

The veteran singer plays acoustic shows in the UK in September and October.

With thirty million record sales to his name, Richard Marx has had a No.1 song on the charts (for himself and others) – including *Right Here Waiting*, *Hold On To The Nights* and *Endless Summer Nights* – in each of the past four decades. We caught up with the American singer, songwriter and producer to talk about his new album, *Songwriter*, and his five-date 'unplugged' UK tour.

You last spoke to *Classic Rock* just before lockdown, about the release of your 2020 album *Limitless*, and a series of unplugged dates in the UK. We all know what happened next.
We do know. And I'm only just starting to get back on the road. Now I'm back there's something palpably different about playing live, a sense of gratitude from the crowds and also from myself. We had been kept apart for two years.

Did lockdown and all that came with it have an effect on your mental health?
It took quite a bit of a toll when I realised it was not going to go away quickly. For the first time in my adult life I was forced to be quiet and still. It took me quite a while to get used to that, but it turns out I kind of liked it.

Presumably the new album, *Songwriter*, was conceived during that 'quiet' time?
Yes, that's correct.

On it you purposely set out to explore a number genres – pop, rock, country and ballads. That's ambitious; most people probably like one or two of those, but few would tick all four boxes.
You're right. But it's something that I've been doing my entire professional life. In my first five years I had hits with Kenny Rogers, Vixen, Philip Bailey [of Earth, Wind & Fire fame] and an R&B artist named Durell Coleman, so I've always been all over the map with genres. It feels very natural. There has been diversity on my previous records, but this time I just thought: "Why not?"

The album's hardest rocking track, *Shame On You*, was written by you with your son Jesse.

GETTY

We wrote that song in twenty minutes flat. We got Taylor Hawkins to play drums on it a month before he passed.

Do you see a lot of yourself in Jesse?
All three of my sons have turned out to be songwriters. Jesse is in a rock band called Mark This Hour. My eldest son Brannon has an incredible voice and is more into electronic music, he's done some things in hip-hop. Although I write pretty frequently with my other son, Lucas, Brannon and I haven't collaborated yet.

You co-wrote one of the ballads on the record, the gorgeous *Always*, with the iconic hit maker Burt Bacharach. How did that come about?
Getting to do that was a life-long dream come true. I reached out to Burt a couple of years ago. It took a while to make it happen. Burt was on tour and then doing a Broadway show… the guy is 91 years old. Talk about inspiring! I wrote the lyrics about how I met my wife Daisy [Fuentes, the 1990s MTV video jockey] late in life. I'm proud to say that it launched a friendship with Burt.

Given the 'cuddliness' of your image, the outspoken nature of your presence on Twitter is quite is remarkable. Some of your take-downs are *brutal*.
I don't go after anybody unless they're an elected official or a politician. Then they're game. Anybody that I go after has already come after me.

All the same, you don't hold back.
Hey, I grew up in Chicago in the sixties and seventies, and if some random person insults me in the street I wouldn't keep walking. I'd be: "What the fuck did you just say?" And it's the same on Twitter. People often ask why I even bother engaging. But in my view, apathy breeds ignorance and rudeness. I love it when these people go away afterwards and close down their accounts. That's fun for me.

How do you feel about social media's growing impact on society? Do you think it's dangerous?
As much as I participate, it's not a good thing. I was a late arrival. My buddy Matt Scannell from the band Vertical Horizon convinced me to try it out, and I was surprised that I had so much fun with it. I didn't really start reacting until the lead-up to the Trump administration. When I'm on Twitter I'm not an artist, I'm an American taxpayer and my opinion is just as valid as anybody's.

Who remains on your bucket list as a potential songwriting partner?
The first names that come to mind are young artists that, frankly, don't need any help from me. I've always fancied the idea of writing with Rod Stewart. And I'd really like to write with JD Souther [Eagles, Linda Ronstadt and a solo artist]; this is interesting, as it might well happen. He's such an incredible poet.

And which artist do you wish would record one of your songs, who is yet to do so?
Rod. Back in the 1990s I sent him a song called *Chains Around My Heart* that I recorded myself. He sent back a note that said: "Lovely song, mate. I'd love to do it but I can't hit those fucking notes." **DL**

Richard Marx's six-date UK tour begins on in Edinburgh on September 30.

Headswim

The long-gone band reunite to play a one-off show in London.

As architect of the 90s alt.rockers' return after more than 20 years away, bassist Clovis Taylor explains how they agreed to a one-off reunion date, at which the quartet will perform their 1994 debut *Flood* in its entirety.

How did this unexpected reunion come about?
Two things set it off. Firstly, I read that our old label, Sony Music, had written off all debts owed by artists signed to the label pre-2000. Which got me thinking about the possibility of re-releasing some of our music. The second thing was Facebook. A fan group had been started, so I had a meeting with the rest of the band and proposed putting out our unreleased third album.

Instead you are re-releasing the band's debut album, *Flood*.
We felt that there would probably be a better interest for that. When Sony decided the print run would be too small to be profitable, a guy called Joel Clayton at the Facebook group had a label, Trapped Animal Records, and was excited to do it. This set other wheels in motion. Why invite people along to a pub for a record release party or a signing, when we could play a gig? We're all still friends and everyone can play – kinda [laughs]. It would have been awkward not to.

The show is at The Underworld in Camden in London, Headswim's old stomping ground.
Yeah. Everything happened so smoothly, it felt like serendipity. It'll be *Flood* from beginning to end, plus other material from that era – when we were a hairy rock band, before becoming Headswim Mk II with [1997 single] *Tourniquet*.

The reissued version of *Flood* adds a bunch of extras to the original.
Besides the CD there will be a beautiful gatefold sleeve double vinyl that includes BBC sessions. There's also a ten-inch laser-cut vinyl that includes *Stinkhorn* from *Flood*, plus unreleased demos.

Coming back to play live more than twenty years after you were last on stage together, is there likely to be some anxiety?
You can bet your bottom dollar. Not only are we treading the boards together after all this time, but we will be playing material recorded in our early twenties when we had plenty of energy. Whether or not we can recreate that, who cares? We are going to do it anyway. And the rehearsals are sounding better and better.

Is there a simple explanation for what caused Headswim to break up?
We were recording our third album, and for whatever reason we just couldn't nail it. We tried twice. Sony lost patience, and when they checked the accounts we were hugely in debt. I'm not blaming them. It was as much our fault for prevaricating.

Afterwards, the band's two brothers, frontman and guitarist Daniel and drummer Tom Glendining, worked together in BlackCar and also Tenebrous Liar, while Nick Watts became a graphic designer and is a touring keyboard player for Danish alt.rockers Mew. What did you do post-Headswim?
To be honest, the end of Headswim was such an earthquake I didn't really pick up the bass again until joining Long Tall Shorty in the mid-2000s.

Headswim's style of music, an edgy, dark strain of psych-rock, is more accepted now than it was twenty years ago.
We were always in the mix but also… er, out of it. The band was never shy of using samples, so our music still feels really contemporary.

Should things go outstandingly well at the Underworld gig, could Headswim continue again, or is this strictly a one-off?
All I can say is… for now, let's see. **DL**

Headswim play London The Underworld on October 7.

Cardinal Black

"The oldest new band in the world" are currently touring the UK, with the final date on October 8.

Fresh from recent supports to Myles Kennedy and The Struts, with a debut album on the launch pad and a 14-date headlining UK tour lined up for Welsh rock-meets-soul quartet Cardinal Black, Chris Buck – previously voted Best New Guitarist, Best Blues Guitarist and Best Pop Guitarist by the readers of *Guitarist* magazine – sits down for a chat with *Classic Rock*.

In mid-2021 a four-month-old Cardinal Black introduced themselves to *Classic Rock* readers with a promise that "the best is yet to come", only for lockdown to slam the door shut.
I feel a bit guilty because for me it was okay. I kept busy, I became a father, and at around that time we put together the bare bones of Cardinal Black.

It was during quarantine that you reconnected with your former bandmates vocalist Tom Hollister and drummer Adam Roberts, aka the Tom Hollister Trio.
That band went way back to 2010, and after breaking up we tried to be acrimonious but couldn't manage it. We had amassed so much material that we got back together and realised how much we enjoyed playing. Jamming the old stuff, the new songs came along really naturally. I guess you could say we're the oldest new band in the world.

First time around, Tom pulled the plug, feeling restricted by the format of a three-piece. Consequently, Cardinal Black are a quartet.
We were getting a lot of comparisons to the Hendrix Experience and Cream, and he felt a bit confined by that. So we brought Sam [Williams] in on bass and Tom focuses on the singing.

And can he sing! Cardinal Black have got soul – something missing in much of today's music.
I agree. This is just the noise the four of us make playing music in a room together – and we've been doing it for a long time.

Why did you take the independent route with the album? There must have been labels that were interested?
There were a few, but we didn't need to look at the small print, the large print said it all. We would be giving a lot away. There was also the fact that some of these songs are so old that we didn't want to give them away, they felt like our babies. So we had a Kickstarter campaign that exceeded all our expectations.

What can you tell us about the album, *January Came Close*?
We produced it ourselves and it's out on September 30, preceded by a single, *Rise Up*, on August 19. We've shot some videos at Abbey Road, which will be drip-fed. There's also a potential support spot to a very special artist that I can't mention by name just yet.

You know you are doing something right when Slash re-posts an Instagram clip of a guitar solo you played at the Winter's End Festival.
I've played with him, I know him and I hope it's no stretch to call him a friend, but it was incredibly surreal to receive a social media notice: "Slash has tagged you in a post", especially as when I was a kid, GN'R were *my* band.

Cardinal Black also toured the UK with Myles Kennedy. Did he give you any feedback?
Because of the backstage covid bubble we didn't get to meet Myles until the last night of the tour, but he told us that he had watched us most nights, and I know that he even posted on Instagram about how much he liked us.

What is the status of your other band, Buck & Evans?
After the gig at the Firestorm Festival we're kind of going onto the back burner for a while. Everybody has stuff going on in their lives, it's no big deal. **DL**

The tour ends in Derby on October 8.

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Tour Dates

BRYAN ADAMS

London	O2 Arena	Dec 14

THE AFGHAN WHIGS

Manchester	Cathedral	Nov 4
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Nov 5
London	Camden Koko	Nov 6

AIRBOURNE, CROBOT, BLUES BILLS

Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Dec 21
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 22

ALEXISONFIRE, BOSTON MANOR

Cardiff	Great Hall	Oct 14
Manchester	Academy	Oct 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 17
Leeds	Academy	Oct 19
Brighton	Dome	Oct 20
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 22

ALTER BRIDGE, HALESTORM, MAMMOTH WVH

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 5
Glasgow	Hydro Arena	Dec 6
Dublin	3 Arena	Dec 8
Manchester	AO Arena	Dec 9
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Dec 11
London	O2 Arena	Dec 12

AMARANTHE, BEYOND THE BLACK

Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 11
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 12

AMORPHIS, ELUVEITIE

Dublin	Academy	Nov 21
Glasgow	QMU	Nov 22
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 23
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 24

ANTHRAX, MUNICIPAL WASTE

Birmingham	Academy	Sep 27
Manchester	Academy	Sep 29
Glasgow	Academy	Sep 30
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 1
Leeds	Academy	Oct 3
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 4
Bristol	Academy	Oct 6
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 8

ANVIL

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 1
Newcastle	Trillians	Oct 2
Huddersfield	The Parish	Oct 3
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 6
Leeds	Key Club	Oct 7
Belfast	Voodoo	Oct 8
Dublin	Grand Social	Oct 9
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Oct 11
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Oct 12
London	Islington Academy	Oct 13
Machynlleth	Red Lion	Oct 14
Swansea	Sin City	Oct 15
Bridgewater	Cobblestones	Oct 16
Southampton	1865	Oct 18
Bournemouth	The Anvil	Oct 19
Hastings	The Crypt	Oct 24

ARENA

Southampton	1865	Sep 29
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 30
London	Islington Powerhaus	Oct 1
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 2
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 3
Liverpool	Academy	Oct 4

Recommended

ASH

Manchester	The Ritz	Sep 15
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 17
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 18

BATTLE BEAST

London	Islington Academy	Sep 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 15
Manchester	Club Academy	Sep 16

BEHEMOTH, ARCH ENEMY, CARCASS, UNTO OTHERS

Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Sep 27
Glasgow	Academy	Sep 29
Manchester	Academy	Sep 30
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 1
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 2

BIFFY CLYRO, ARCHITECTS

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 5
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 6
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 8
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 9
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 11
London	O2 Arena	Nov 12
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 14
Bournemouth	BIC	Nov 15

THE BLACK CROWES, REEF

Dublin	3 Arena	Sep 21
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 24
London	Brixton Academy	Sep 26, 27

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 18
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 19

BONHAM-BULLICK

Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Sep 16
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Sep 18
Kinross	Green Hotel	Sep 29
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 30
Hull	Wrecking Ball Arts Centre	Oct 1
Henley	Crooked Billet	Oct 26

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

London	Palladium	Oct 1
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Oct 3
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 4
Dublin	The Helix	Oct 6

CARAVAN

Brighton	Old Market	Oct 7
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 8
Hampshire	Haymarket Theatre	Oct 9
Basingstoke	Haymarket	Oct 9
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 13
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 14
Liverpool	Epstein Theatre	Oct 15
Buxton	Pavilion	Oct 16
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 21
Glasgow	Òran Mór	Oct 22
Stamford	Corn Exchange	Oct 23
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Oct 25

CARDINAL BLACK

Ashington	White House	Sep 16
Liverpool	Academy 2	Sep 17
Hull	Adelphi	Sep 18
Manchester	Night & Day Café	Sep 19
Birmingham	Institute 3	Sep 21
London	Highbury Garage	Sep 22
Newport	The Neon	Sep 24
Bristol	Thekla	Sep 27
Exeter	The Cavern	Oct 5
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 7
Derby	Flowerpot	Oct 8

CATS IN SPACE

Wimborne	Tivoli	Sep 30
Dover	Booking Hall	Oct 2
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 13
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 14
Tavistock	The Wharf	Oct 15
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 16
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 22
Reading	Sub 89	Oct 26
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Oct 27
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 29

CAVE IN, STAKE

London	Heaven	Oct 24
Bristol	The Exchange	Oct 25
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 26
Glasgow	Room 2	Oct 28

CLUTCH

Glasgow	Academy	Nov 11
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 12
Leeds	Academy	Nov 13
Exeter	Great Hall	Nov 15
Brighton	Dome	Nov 16
Bristol	Academy	Dec 13
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 14
Manchester	Academy	Dec 15
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 16
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 17

JOHN COGHLAN'S QUO

Aldershot	West End Centre	Sep 16
Portsmouth	Wedgwood Rooms	Sep 17
Minehead	Butlins Quo Convention	Sep 24

COHEED AND CAMBRIA, THRICE, TOUCHÉ AMORÉ

Bristol	Academy	Oct 14

Classic Rock Recommends

BOB DYLAN

The term 'legend' has become devalued by being applied to any Tom, Dick or Harry, but here's a chance to catch a genuine one.

See below for dates. Currently October 19 to October 31.

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 15
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 16
Manchester	Academy	Oct 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 19
Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Oct 20

CROBOT

Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 21
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Nov 22
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 23
Glasgow	Cathouse	Nov 24
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 25

CROW BLACK CHICKEN

New Milton	Forest Arts Centre	Oct 20
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Oct 21
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 23
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Oct 24

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

Brighton	Patterns	Oct 6
Chelmsford	Social Club	Oct 7
Bath	Arts Centre	Oct 8
Stockton	Georgian Theatre	Oct 21
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Oct 22
Glasgow	Nice & Sleazy	Oct 23
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Oct 24
Hull	Adelphi	Oct 25
Newcastle	Trillians	Oct 26
Preston	The Ferret	Oct 28
Birmingham	Institute 3	Oct 29
Bristol	Thekla	Oct 30
Ramsgate	Music Hall	Nov 3
Winchester	Railway Inn	Nov 4
Hastings	The Piper	Nov 5
Northampton	Black Prince	Nov 11

THE CURE

Dublin	3 Arena	Dec 1
Belfast	SSE Arena	Dec 2
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 4
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 6
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Dec 7
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 8
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 11-13

THE DAMNED

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 28, 29
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 3
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 4
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 5

THE DAMN TRUTH

Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 18
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 23
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 25
Glasgow	Stereo	Oct 26
York	Fulford	Oct 27
London	Camden Black Heart	Oct 28

DARE, TROY REDFERN

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 6
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 7
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 8
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Oct 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 14
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 15
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Oct 21
Southampton	1865	Oct 22
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 23

London	Islington Academy	Oct 27
Manchester	Academy	Oct 28
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Oct 29

DEEP PURPLE, BLUE ÖYSTER CULT

London	O2 Arena	Oct 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 22
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 23
Birmingham	Arena	Oct 25
Manchester	Arena	Oct 26

FRANCIS DUNNERY'S IT BITES

Glasgow	Saint Luke's	Jan 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jan 20
Manchester	Club Academy	Jan 21
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jan 22

THE DUST CODA, THE HOWLING TIDES

London	Camden Powerhaus	Oct 28
Norwich	Brickmakers	Oct 29
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 30
Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 4
Derby	The Venue	Nov 5
Brighton	Hope And Ruin	Nov 6

BOB DYLAN

London	Palladium	Oct 19, 20, 23, 24
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 26
Hull	Bonus Arena	Oct 27
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 28
Glasgow	Armadillo	Oct 30, 31

ENUFF Z'NUFF

Manchester	Retro Bar	Nov 2
London	Nightclub Kolis	Nov 4
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 5
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 6
Bradford	Nighttrain	Nov 9
Dublin	Grand Social	Nov 10
Belfast	Voodoo	Nov 11
Crumlin	The Patriot	Nov 12
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 13
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 16

ESOTERICA

London	King's Cross Scala	Sep 22

EVANESCENCE, WITHIN TEMPTATION

London	O2 Arena	Nov 14
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Nov 15
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 17
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 19

EVERGREY, FRACTAL UNIVERSE, VIRTUAL SYMMETRY

London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Sep 17
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 18
Bristol	Thekla	Sep 19
Manchester	Academy 3	Sep 20
Dublin	Voodoo Lounge	Sep 21
Glasgow	Cathouse	Sep 22
Newcastle	St Dom's Social Club	Sep 23
Birmingham	Asylum 2	Sep 24

SAMANTHA FISH, WILLE & THE BANDITS

Oxford	Academy	Oct 15
Manchester	Academy	Oct 16
Brighton	Chalk	Oct 18

GETTY

Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 20
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Oct 21
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 22
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 23
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 24
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Oct 25
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 26
Bath	Komedia	Oct 27

FLORENCE BLACK

Southampton	Joiners Arms	Oct 2
Norwich	Brickmakers	Oct 3
London	Camden Black Heart	Oct 5
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 6
Birmingham	The Flapper	Oct 7
Manchester	Rebellion	Oct 10
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 11
Glasgow	Stereo Café Bar	Oct 12
Leeds	Key Club	Oct 13
Bristol	The Exchange	Oct 16

FM

Bradford	Nightrain	Oct 28
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Oct 29
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 30
Dover	Booking Hall	Nov 27

FOCUS

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 9
Glasgow	The Ferry	Nov 10
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 11
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 12, 13
Ely	Maltings	Nov 21
Southampton	1865	Nov 23
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 24
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Nov 25
Lewes	Conservative Club	Nov 26
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Apr 20

FOZZY, ESCAPE THE FATE, SCARLET REBELS

Manchester	New Century Hall	Nov 4
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 6
Dublin	National Stadium	Nov 8
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Nov 9
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 10
Bournemouth	Academy	Nov 11
Bristol	Academy	Nov 12
Glasgow	SWG3	Nov 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 14

Recommended

PETER FRAMPTON

Hanley	Victoria Hall	Nov 5
Glasgow	Armadillo	Nov 6
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 8

FREEDOM CALL

London	Camden Underworld	Nov 12

FROST*

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 27
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Nov 28
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 29
Bath	Komedia	Nov 30
London	Islington Academy	Dec 1

GINGER WILDHEART & THE SINNERS

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 18
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 19
Huddersfield	Parish	Oct 20
Cardiff	Globe	Oct 22
Plymouth	Junction	Oct 23
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Oct 25
Norwich	Brickmakers	Oct 26
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Oct 27
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 29
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 30

GODSMACK

Glasgow	Academy	Oct 8
Manchester	Academy	Oct 9
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 11
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 12

GONG, OZRIC TENTACLES

Leicester	Academy 2	Nov 16
Brighton	Concorde 2	Nov 17
Sheffield	Academy 2	Nov 18
Liverpool	Academy 2	Nov 19
Bristol	Trinity	Nov 20
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 23
Oxford	Academy 2	Nov 24
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 25
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 26
Glasgow	Grange	Nov 27
Birmingham	Academy 2	Nov 29
Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 30

Cambridge	Junction	Dec 1
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Dec 2
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Dec 3

GRAND SLAM, SONS OF LIBERTY

Grimsby	Yardbirds	Sep 15
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 16
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Sep 17
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 18
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 21
Swindon	The Victoria	Sep 22
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Sep 24

GUN

Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 30
London	Islington Academy	Dec 1
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Dec 2
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Dec 4
Bath	Komedia	Dec 5
Sunderland	Firestation	Dec 6
Galashiels	Mac Arts Centre	Dec 7
Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 10
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Dec 11
Newport	Patriot	Mar 31
Narbeth	Queens Hall	Apr 1
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 2

STEVE HACKETT

Portsmouth	Guildhall	Sep 16
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Sep 17
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 18
Hull	City Hall	Sep 20
Gateshead	The Sage	Sep 22
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 23
York	Barbican	Sep 24
Buxton	Opera House	Sep 26
Grimsby	Auditorium	Sep 27
Northampton	Derngate	Sep 28
Sheffield	City Hall	Sep 30
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 1
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Oct 3
Ipswich	Regent Theatre	Oct 4
Bath	Forum	Oct 5
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 7
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 8
Brighton	Centre	Oct 9
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 11
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 12

STEVE HARLEY & COCKNEY REBEL

Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Dec 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 11
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Dec 16
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Dec 19
Birmingham	Town Hall	Dec 20
Manchester	RNCM	Dec 22

BETH HART

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 7
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 9
Sheffield	City Hall	Mar 11
Manchester	Bridgwater Hall	Mar 13
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 15
London	Palladium	Mar 17, 18
Brighton	Dome	Mar 21

JUSTIN HAYWARD

Bournemouth	Pavilion	Sep 17
Eastleigh	Concorde Club	Sep 18
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Sep 19
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Sep 21
Northampton	Derngate	Sep 22
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Sep 23

HEADSWIM

London	Camden Underworld	Oct 7

H.E.A.T, MASON HILL, COLLATERAL

Leeds	Warehouse	Oct 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 15
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 16
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 17
London	Camden Electric Brixton	Oct 18

ROBYN HITCHCOCK

Falmouth	Cornish Bank	Sep 13
Totnes	Barrel House	Sep 14
Bristol	Redgrave Theatre	Sep 15
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Sep 20
Reading	South Street Arts Centre	Sep 21
Deal	The Lighthouse	Sep 22
Norwich	Puppet Theatre	Sep 23
London	Alexandra Palace Theatre	Feb 25

WARNER E HODGES BAND, RYAN HAMILTON

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 12
London	King's Cross Water Rats	Oct 13
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 14
Newport	The Patriot	Oct 15
Bristol	Theka	Oct 16
Leicester	The Musician	Oct 18
York	The Crescent	Oct 19
Winchester	The Railway	Oct 20
Sheffield	The Greystones	Oct 21, 22
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 23

Classic Rock Recommends

ROBERT PLANT & SAVING GRACE FEATURING SUZI DIAN

It's acoustic vibes when Plant teams up with "one of the most remarkable women singers of my entire career".

See opposite page for dates. Currently October 25 to November 9.

Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 26
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 27
Orkney	Stromness Town Hall	Oct 29
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 30

THE HU

Manchester	Academy	Nov 28
Leeds	Stylus	Nov 30
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 1
Cardiff	Great Hall	Dec 2
Birmingham	Institute	Dec 3
Dublin	Olympia	Dec 5
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Dec 6
Glasgow	SWG3	Dec 7
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 9

JACK J HUTCHINSON

Winchester	Railway Inn	Oct 5
Norwich	Brickmakers	Oct 8
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Oct 9
Bristol	Thunderbolt	Oct 14
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 19
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 20
Newcastle	Trillians	Oct 21
St Austell	Band Club	Nov 12

INCUBUS

Birmingham	Academy	Sep 28
London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 29, 30
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 2

INGLORIOUS, A NEW TOMORROW

Manchester	Academy 3	Sep 16
Newcastle	Riverside	Sep 17
Dunfermline	PJ Malloys	Sep 18
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Sep 20
Hull	The Welly	Sep 21
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 22
Merthyr	Red House	Sep 23
Norwich	Brickmakers	Sep 25
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 26
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Sep 27
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 28
Bristol	Thekla	Sep 30
Tavistock	The Wharf	Oct 1
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 2
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Oct 3

LAURENCE JONES

Frome	Cheese And Grain	Sep 16
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Sep 17
Wavendon	The Stables	Sep 18
St Ives	Guildhall	Sep 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 20
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Sep 22
Lincoln	The Drill	Sep 23
Aldershot	West End Centre	Sep 24
Derby	Flowerpot	Sep 30
Sittingbourne	Bournefest	Oct 1
Swindon	Level 3	Oct 2
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 6
Carlisle	Blues Festival	Oct 8
York	The Crescent	Oct 9
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 13
Whitby	Pavilion Theatre	Oct 14
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 20
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Oct 21
Sedgefield	Parish Hall	Oct 22
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 27
Leicester The Musician Oct 28		

CHEZ KANE

London	Islington Academy 2	Oct 27
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 28
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 3
Crumlin	The Patriot	Nov 4
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 5
Newcastle	Think Tank	Nov 6
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 18
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Nov 19
Cannock	The Station	Nov 22

KINGDOM OF MADNESS: CLASSIC MAGNUM

Bradford	Nightrain	Oct 7
Leicester	Y Theatre	Oct 8
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 28

KING KING

Northampton	Roadmender	Oct 16
Southampton	1865	Oct 20
Liverpool	Grand Central Hall	Oct 21
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 2

CORKY LAING PLAYS MOUNTAIN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Nov 15
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Nov 16
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 17
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 18
Sedgefield	Parish Hall	Nov 19
Whitby	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	Nov 20

AYNSLEY LISTER

Leicester	The Musician	Sep 23
Louth	Blues Club	Sep 24
Sittingbourne	Bournefest	Oct 1

NICK LOWE

London	Kensington Nell's	Nov 17-19, 24-26

ERJA LYYTINEN, DOM MARTIN

Southampton	1876	Nov 7
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 8
London	Highbury The Grace	Nov 9
Grimsby	Yardbirds	Nov 10

MAGENTA, TIGER MOTH TALES

Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Oct 21, 22
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 23
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Rooms	Oct 29
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 30
St Helens	Citadel	Nov 4
Sheffield	Local Authority	Nov 5

MAGNUM

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Sep 16
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 17
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 18
Bristol	The Fleece	Sep 19
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Dec 6
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 10

MARILLION

Blackburn	King George's Hall	Sep 18
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 19
York	Barbican	Sep 21
Southampton	Guildhall	Sep 22
Aylesbury	Friars Waterside	Sep 24
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Sep 25
Sheffield	City Hall	Sep 27

GETTY

Brighton	Dome	Sep 28
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 30

Recommended

RICHARD MARX

Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Sep 30
Manchester	RNCM	Oct 1
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Oct 3, 4, 6

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

CHANTEL McGREGOR

Selby	Town Hall	Sep 16
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Oct 6
Birmingham	Asylum	Oct 7
Cornwall	Rocks Festival	Oct 8
Halifax	Albany Arcade	Oct 15
Morecambe	The Platform	Oct 29
Hull	Adelphi	Nov 4
Glasgow	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	Nov 6
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 10
Whitby	Rocks Festival	Nov 18
Sevenoaks	Stag Theatre	Dec 9

DON McLEAN, ELLES BAILEY

Bath	Forum	Sep 16
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Sep 17
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Sep 18
Brighton	Dome	Sep 20
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Sep 21
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Sep 23
Gateshead	The Sage	Sep 24
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 25
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Sep 27
York	Barbican	Sep 28
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Sep 30
Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 1
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 2
London	Palladium	Oct 4
Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 7

MARCO MENDOZA

Inverness	Monsterfest	Oct 28
Chesterfield	Real Time	Nov 3
Bournemouth	Bears Cave	Nov 4
Birmingham	Asylum	Nov 5
Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 6
Hull	O'Rileys	Nov 7
Dundee	Beat Generator	Nov 10
Bathgate	Dreadnought	Nov 11
Lancaster	The Pub	Nov 12
London	Camden Underworld	Nov 13

THE MENTULLS

Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 29
Fleet	The Harlington	Nov 6
Bury	The Met	Nov 26

MINISTRY

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 2
Glasgow	SWG3 TV Studio	Nov 3
Dublin	National Stadium	Nov 4
Manchester	Damnation Festival	Nov 5

MOLLY HATCHET

Buckley	The Tivoli	Nov 24
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 25
Troon	Winterstorm Festival	Nov 26
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 11
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Nov 28
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Nov 29

MONSTER TRUCK, THOSE DAMN CROWS

Dover	Booking Hall	Sep 29
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 30
Oxford	Academy	Oct 2
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 5
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 6
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 7
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 11
Brighton	Concorde 2	Oct 12
Cardiff	Great Hall	Oct 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 16
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 17

MUSE

Plymouth	Home Park	May 27
Huddersfield	John Smith's Stadium	Jun 20
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 23
Milton Keynes	National Bowl	Jun 25

NIGHTWISH, BEAST IN BLACK, TURMION KÄTILÖT

London	Wembley Arena	Nov 21
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 22
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 23

OPETH, VOIVOD

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 18

ORANGE GOBLIN

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Dec 16

PAPA ROACH, DON BROCO

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 21
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 23
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Mar 24
London	Alexandra Palace	Mar 25

PAVEMENT

Leeds	Academy	Oct 17
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 18
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 19
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 20
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 22-25
Dublin	Vicar Street	Nov 10

PLACEBO

Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 18
Brighton	Centre	Nov 19
Liverpool	Olympia	Nov 21
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Nov 22
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 24
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 26, 27
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Nov 29
Leeds	Academy	Nov 30
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 2
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 3
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Dec 7
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 8

ROBERT PLANT & SAVING GRACE FEATURING SUZI DIAN

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Oct 25
Cork	Everyman Theatre	Oct 27
Galway	Town Hall	Oct 28
Sligo	Knocknarea Arena	Oct 30
Dublin	Olympia	Oct 31
Wexford	Speigletent Festival	Nov 2
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Nov 5
Glasgow	King's Theatre	Nov 6
Aberdeen	Tivoli Theatre	Nov 8
Perth	Concert Hall	Nov 9

BEN POOLE

Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 18
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 19

PORCUPINE TREE

London	Wembley Arena	Nov 11

POWERWOLF, WARKINGS

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 29

PRAYING MANTIS

Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 20

THE PRETTY RECKLESS

Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 26
Manchester	Academy	Oct 27
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 29
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 30
Bristol	Academy	Nov 1
Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 2
Norwich	UEA	Nov 3
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 5

SUZI QUATRO

Belfast	Waterfront Hall	Sep 23

FÉLIX RABIN

Hull	Adelphi	Nov 22
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Nov 23
Barnoldswick	Arts Centre	Nov 24
Keighley	Studio 5 Live	Nov 25
Doncaster	The Leopard	Nov 26
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 27
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 28
Leicester	The Musician	Nov 29
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Nov 30
London	Kensington Nell's	Dec 1
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Dec 4

THE RASMUS

Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 31
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 1
Bristol	Academy	Nov 2
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 3

REEF

Plymouth	The Depot	Oct 13
Tenby	De Valence Pavilion	Oct 14
Bristol	Academy	Oct 15
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 20
Guildford	Casino	Oct 21
Hastings	St Mary-In-The-Castle	Oct 27
Margate	Dreamland	Oct 28
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 29
Northampton	Roadmender	Nov 10
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 11
Minehead	Shine On Weekender	Nov 12
Bournemouth	Academy	Dec 1
Hull	The Welly	Dec 2

RHINO'S REVENGE

Carshalton	Cryer Arts	Oct 28
Chichester	Inn	Oct 29
London	Putney Half Moon	Oct 30

MUSE

What's not to like about a set of cool songs, punchy, powerful performances and an eye-popping stage show?

See below for dates. Currently May 27 and June 20, 23 and 25 next year.

ROXY MUSIC

Glasgow	Hydro	Oct 10
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 12
London	O2 Arena	Oct 14

SAXON, DIAMOND HEAD

Ipswich	Regent	Nov 11
Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 12
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Nov 13
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 14
Bath	Forum	Nov 15
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 16
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 18
Blackburn	King's George Hall	Nov 19
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Nov 20
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 21
Hull	City Hall	Nov 22
York	Barbican	Nov 23
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Nov 25
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 26

SEPULTURA, SACRED REICH, CROWBAR

Glasgow	QMU	Nov 1
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 2
Dublin	Academy	Nov 3
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Nov 4
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 5

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Cardiff	Tramshed	Nov 22
Exeter	Corn Exchange	Nov 23
Reading	Hexagon	Nov 25
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Nov 26
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Nov 28
Birmingham	Town Hall	Nov 30
Newcastle	Tyne Theatre & Opera House	Dec 1
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Dec 2
Sheffield	City Hall	Dec 4
Wavendon	The Stables	Dec 5
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Dec 7
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Dec 9
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Dec 10
High Wycombe	Old Town Hall	Dec 11

THE SHEEPDOGS

Bristol	Thekla	Oct 7
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 8
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 9

KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD

Bristol	Academy	Oct 15
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 16
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 18
Warrington	Parr Hall	Oct 20
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 21
Sheffield	Academy	Oct 22
Gateshead	Tyne Theatre	Oct 23

SHINEDOWN, ASKING ALEXANDRIA, ZERO 9:36

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 26
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 27
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 29
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 30
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 1

SIGUR RÓS

Manchester	Apollo	Nov 7
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 10, 11

Glasgow	SECC	Nov 14
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 17

SIKTH, PALM READER

Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 25
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 26

SKID ROW, WINGER, PHIL X & THE DRILLS, COLLATERAL

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 19
Brighton	Chalk	Oct 20
Cardiff	Y Plass	Oct 21
Bristol	Academy	Oct 23
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 24
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 25
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 27
Sheffield	Academy	Oct 28
Liverpool	Grand Central Hall	Oct 29
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 31
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Nov 1
Cambridge	Junction	Nov 3
Great Yarmouth	HRH Festival	Nov 4
Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 18

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND

Dublin	RDS Arena	May 5, 7
Edinburgh	Murrayfield Stadium	May 30
Birmingham	Villa Park	Jun 16
London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jul 6, 8

STATUS QUO

Aberdeen	P&J Live	Nov 25
Glasgow	SECC	Nov 26
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 28
Brighton	Centre	Nov 30
Bournemouth	BIC	Dec 1
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 3

STEELEYE SPAN

Newcastle	Tyne Theatre & Opera House	Oct 5
Glasgow	Pavilion Theatre	Oct 7
Manchester	RNCM	Oct 8
Scunthorpe	Baths Hall	Oct 9
Blackburn	King's Hall	Oct 10
Dudley	Town Hall	Oct 12
Suffolk	Lavenham Church	Oct 13
Kings Lynn	St Nicholas Chapel	Oct 14
Northampton	Spinney Theatre	Oct 16
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 17
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 18
High Wycombe	Old Town Hall	Oct 20
Exeter	Corn Exchange	Oct 21
Leicester	Y Theatre	Oct 23
Wimbourne	Tivoli	Oct 24
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 25
East Grinstead	Chequer Mead Theatre	Oct 27
Hailsham	Pavilion	Oct 29
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Oct 30
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Oct 31
Basingstoke	The Haymarket	Nov 1

ROD STEWART

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 16
London	O2 Arena	Nov 22, 25
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 29
Aberdeen	P&J Live	Dec 2
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 3
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Dec 6
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Dec 9, 10

BACK TO LIVE

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 13
Manchester	AO Arena	Dec 14
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Dec 17

STRANGLERS

Limerick	Big Top	Sep 22
Dublin	Olympia	Sep 23
Belfast	Limelight	Sep 24

SWEET

Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 24
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Nov 25
Lytham	Lowther Pavilion Theatre	Nov 26
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 27
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Dec 1
Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock	Dec 2
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Dec 3
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 4
Oxford	Academy	Dec 8
Northampton	Roadmender	Dec 9
Manchester	Academy	Dec 10
Norwich	Waterfront	Dec 11
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Dec 15
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Dec 16
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 18

SWEET CRISIS

Chelmsford	Hot Box	Nov 11
Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 16
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 17
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Nov 18
Manchester	Eagle Inn	Nov 19
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	Nov 25

COREY TAYLOR, CHERRY BOMBS

London	Palladium	Oct 17
Hull	Bonus Arena	Oct 19
Manchester	BEC Arena	Oct 21
Swansea	Arena	Oct 21

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND

Dublin	Helix	Nov 2
London	Palladium	Nov 4-6
Manchester	Academy	Nov 9
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 10

THERAPY?

Plymouth	Depo	Nov 10
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Nov 11
Dover	Booking Hall	Nov 17
Bournemouth	Sound Circus	Nov 18
Guildford	Casino	Nov 19
Swansea	Sin City	Nov 20
Bedford	Esquires	Nov 20
Liverpool	Academy 2	Dec 1
Huddersfield	Parish	Dec 2
Swindon	Level 3	Dec 3
Colchester	Arts Center	Dec 14
Stoke-on-Trent	The Sugarmill	Dec 15
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Dec 16

THREE DAYS GRACE, 10 YEARS

Manchester	Academy	Sep 16
Glasgow	SWG3	Sep 18
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 19

DEVIN TOWNSEND

Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Mar 28
Bristol	Academy	Mar 29
Manchester	Academy	Mar 31
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 1
Newcastle	University	Apr 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 4
Norwich	UEA	Apr 5

TRIVIUM, HEAVEN SHALL BURN

Glasgow	Academy	Jan 12
Birmingham	Academy	Jan 13
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jan 14
London	Brixton Academy	Jan 15

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Darlington	Forum Music Centre	Sep 16
Petworth	Leconfield Hall	Sep 17
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Sep 22
Deal	Astor Theatre	Sep 23
Colchester	Arts Centre	Sep 24
Gravesend	Red Lion	Sep 25
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Oct 1
Diss	Corn Hall	Oct 13
Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Oct 14
Lowdham	Village Hall	Oct 15
Hockley	The Soundry	Nov 11
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Feb 24
Chelmsford	Social Club	Mar 3
St Helens	Citadel	Mar 5
Maidenhead	Norden Farm Centre	Mar 10
Derby	Flowerpot	Mar 16
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 17
Hull	Wrecking Ball Arts Centre	Mar 18
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 19
Morecambe	The Platform	Mar 22
Glasgow	The Ferry	Mar 23
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 24, 25

Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 26
Southampton	1865	Mar 30
Dartmouth	Flavel	Apr 1

TYGERS OF PAN TANG

Newport	The Patriot	Oct 7
Southampton	1865	Oct 10
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 10
Norwich	Waterfront	Nov 11
London	Camden Black Heart	Nov 12

UGLY KID JOE, MASSIVE WAGONS

Liverpool	Academy	Nov 3
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 4
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 6
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 8
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 10
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 11

URIAH HEEP

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 30
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 2
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 3
London	Palladium	Oct 5
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 6
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 8
York	Barbican	Oct 9
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 10
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Oct 11

DANNY VAUGHN (UNPLUGGED)

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 24
Glasgow	The Attic	Nov 25
Ballymena	The Diamond	Nov 26
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 27
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Dec 1
Newport	The Patriot	Dec 2
Newcastle	The Cluny	Dec 3
London	Highbury The Grace	Dec 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 6
Sheffield	Local Authority	Dec 8
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 9

Recommended

VIRGINMARYS

Glasgow	Attic	Oct 13
Huddersfield	Parish	Oct 14
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 15
Reading	Face Bar	Oct 16
Nottingham	Rough Trade	Oct 20
Hull	Tower Ballroom	Oct 21
Brecon	Northhouse	Oct 22
London	Hoxton Colours	Oct 23
Bristol	Louisiana	Oct 24
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Oct 26
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 27
Newcastle	St Dom's	Oct 28
Inverness	Monsterfest	Oct 29

VOLA, VOYAGER

Bristol	The Fleece	Sep 27
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 28
London	Highbury Garage	Sep 29

VOLBEAT, SKINDRED, NAPALM DEATH

Dublin	3 Arena	Dec 12
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 15
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 16
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 17
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 19
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 20

RICK WAKEMAN'S GRUMPY CHRISTMAS STOCKING

Croydon	Ashcroft Theatre	Nov 24
Dartford	Orchard Theatre	Nov 27
Newcastle	Tyne Theatre	Nov 29
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Nov 30
Poole	Lighthouse	Dec 2
Bath	Forum	Dec 3
Barnstaple	Queen's Theatre	Dec 4
Swansea	Grand Theatre	Dec 5
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Dec 6
Birmingham	Town Hall	Dec 8
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Dec 10
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Dec 11
York	Barbican	Dec 13
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Dec 14
Buxton	Opera House	Dec 16
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Dec 17
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Dec 21

WHEN RIVERS MEET

Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Oct 14
Bristol	Academy	Oct 15
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 16
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 18
Huddersfield	Parish	Oct 21
Sheffield	Academy	Oct 22
York	Crescent	Oct 23
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Oct 27

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

She's still got the blues – and a lot more as well. Catch the award-winning singer/guitarist and feel the force.

See previous page for dates. Currently November 22 to December 11.

GETTY

Liverpool	Arts Club	Oct 29
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 30

CJ WILDHEART, GRAND THEFT AUDIO, SCOTT SORRY

Cardiff	Globe	Sep 16
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Sep 17
Norwich	Epic Studios	Sep 19
Birmingham	Institute	Sep 20
Brighton	Concorde 2	Sep 21
Southampton	The Brook	Sep 23
London	Shoreditch Xoyo	Sep 24

WISHBONE ASH

Leicester	Y Theatre	Oct 15
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Oct 17
Norwich	Epic Studios	Oct 18
Dorking	Grand Hall	Oct 19
Oxford	Academy	Oct 20
London	Islington Academy	Oct 21
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 22
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 23
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Oct 25
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Oct 26
Glasgow	The Ferry	Oct 27
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 28
Lochgelly	Centre	Oct 29
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Oct 30
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Nov 1
Stockton-on-Tees	The ARC	Nov 2
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Nov 3
Bury	The Met	Nov 4
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 5
Wavendon	The Stables	Nov 6
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Nov 8
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 9
Wimborne	Tivoli	Nov 10
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Nov 11
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 12
Aberdare	Coliseum Theatre	Nov 13
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 15
Leamington Spa	Assembly	Nov 16
Liverpool	Academy	Nov 17
Buxton	Opera House	Nov 18
Derby	The Venue	Nov 19

TONY WRIGHT

Settle	Victoria Hall	Oct 7
Scunthorpe	Café Indie	Oct 8
Todmorden	Golden Lion	Oct 9
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 11
Glasgow	Hug And Pint	Oct 12
Isle Of Man	Colby Glen	Oct 14
Scarborough	Vibe	Oct 19
Hull	The Welly	Oct 20
Doncaster	Imperial	Oct 21
Blackpool	Compass Café	Oct 22
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Oct 26
Plymouth	Junction	Oct 27
Newport	Le Pub	Oct 28
Stafford	The Ship Aground	Oct 29
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Nov 3
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	Nov 4
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 6

ZEAL & ARDOR

Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 6
Brighton	Concorde 2	Nov 7
Bristol	Trinity Centre	Nov 8
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 9

Glasgow	Òran Mór	Nov 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 13
London	Brixton Electric	Nov 13

MIKE ZITO, ALBERT CASTIGLIA

Carlisle	Brickyard	Oct 9
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Oct 10
Birmingham	Jam House	Oct 11
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 14
Hartlepool	South Durham WMC	Oct 15
Devizes	Long Street Blues Club	Oct 16
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	Oct 17
London	Putney Half Moon	Oct 18
Southampton	1865	Oct 19

Festivals

CLEETHORPES BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
MARTIN TURNER, REBECCA DOWNES, CHRIS BEVINGTON ORGANISATION, MORE

Cleethorpes	Beachcomber	Oct 23

CORNWALL ROCKS
TYGERS OF PAN TANG, ROCK GODDESS, GRAND SLAM, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Oct 7-9

GLASGOW BLUES RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
FULL HOUSE, CHANTEL McGREGOR, STEVIE NIMMO, MORE

Glasgow	Òran Mór	Nov 6

HARD ROCK HELL
SKID ROW, THE DARKNESS, VANDENBURG, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 3-6

LOOE BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
ELLES BAILEY, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, LAURENCE JONES, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Dec 2-4

MONSTERFEST
GUN, MASON HILL, VIRGINMARYS, MORE

Inverness	One Touch Theatre	Oct 26-29

NEW WAVE OF CLASSIC ROCK LIVE
THE DUST CODA, BAD TOUCH, SCARLET REBELS, MORE

Wolverhampton KK's Steel Mill		Oct 1, 2

TOMORROW'S GHOSTS
FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM, NEW MODEL ARMY, BALAAM & THE ANGEL, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Oct 28-30

WHITBY ROCKS
CHANTEL McGREGOR, GERRY JABLONSKI, SONS OF LIBERTY

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 18

WINTERSTORM FESTIVAL
VANDENBERG, MOLLY HATCHET, MORE

Troon	Concert Hall	Nov 26, 27

LOWY HUGHES ALDRICH TICHY

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07 WOLVERHAMPTON	KK'S STEEL MILL*#
10 DUBLIN	ACADEMY#
11 BELFAST	LIMELIGHT#
13 EDINBURGH	O2 ACADEMY*#
15 BRISTOL	SWX*#

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The Orchard

'Nimble musicianship and unforgettable turns of phrase.'

Brian Fallon and co: songs from their punkier early years draw the most enlivened response.

GETTY x4

The Gaslight Anthem

London Wembley Arena

Returning New Jersey quartet blow hot and cold at their biggest-ever UK headline show.

★ Brian Fallon wants a sign. Specifically, The Gaslight Anthem's frontman wants a sign to be held aloft by a fan who requested, via Twitter, that the quartet perform a certain song tonight at the first of their UK comeback shows. "The Boss gets a sign! Make a sign!" Fallon says with mock indignation, knowing full well that tonight a glittering sheet of poster paper is about to be carefully handed over the heads of the front few rows to him on stage.

This tells us a few things. The most obvious is that The Gaslight Anthem's sabbatical has done nothing to dull Fallon's sense of humour. It also suggests that he has long-since put to bed his frustrations at his band constantly being referenced in the shadow of one of their biggest influences: Bruce Springsteen, whose patronage played a key role in breaking TGA beyond the punk community. We also learn that if you hold up a fan's glittered-covered request to play *Old White Lincoln*, one of the many anthems on the band's 2008 breakout album *The '59 Sound*, you will end up with fingers flecked with gold sparkle. "It's all over me now," Fallon reflects, a neat physical metaphor suggesting that the music that he's made, which has touched so many, still leaves its mark.

When The Gaslight Anthem embarked on their hiatus, Fallon was vocal about his exasperation that a sizeable percentage of their audience were unwilling to let the quartet stray far from the style perfected on *The '59 Sound*. And tonight, inarguably, it's still the songs from the punkier first half of the band's career that draw the most enlivened response. To some, this is where TGA belong, and Fallon's later attempts to cross over into classic rock territory, seen as an attempt to court a broader demographic, are regarded as something of a betrayal. It's a viewpoint that depends largely on when one discovered the band and personal musical preferences, but it means that whenever Gaslight Anthem play live they must seek to strike a balance between two genres. Which is not easy, and they appear to know it.

"I have written the absolute worst set-list in the world… you are going to go home and curse us," Fallon jokes early on. He's done nothing of the sort, of course, but it quickly becomes apparent that tonight's set loses momentum when it pinballs back and forth between the adrenal rush that pulsed through much of their first three albums and the slower, grungier material from the second half of *Handwritten* and the mix-and-match of styles on *Get Hurt*, their most recent and least-loved collection, which includes five of the 22 songs on tonight's set-list.

There are other factors that dilute the impact of what should be a triumphant return from TGA. By far the largest venue they're playing on this UK run, Wembley appears to be a shade over half-full – a situation doubtless not helped by tonight's rail strike. And while the band's attempts to flesh out their sound to fill the stage and the space with some new ideas are laudable, the honky-tonk piano extending the intro to *The Diamond Church Street Choir* is the only one that really lands. This boxy arena sucks the air out of songs which, in another setting, would have drawn the audience in with their nimble musicianship and unforgettable turns of phrase.

After just over 90 minutes of mixed results, the title track of *The '59 Sound* roars into life, only to falter towards the end when a lengthy bridge and solo strands its traditional singalong with nowhere to go. It's another final, somewhat frustrating, missed connection, and one imagines that Fallon isn't blind to that fact.

It remains to be seen how lessons learned on nights like this might impact upon the band's promised new album, but clearly TGA 2.0 have some decisions to make to ensure their return transcends mere nostalgia.

Alistair Lawrence

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GRAND THEFT AUDIO
CJ WILDHEART
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SEPTEMBER
9 GLASGOW CLASSIC GRAND
10 NEWCASTLE RIVERSIDE
11 MANCHESTER REBELLION
13 LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL
15 BRISTOL FLEECE
16 CARDIFF GLOBE
17 EXETER PHOENIX
19 NORWICH EPIC STUDIOS
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CLASSIC ROCK

'Turin Brakes surprise with some stratospheric Floyd-guitar bombast.'

Cropredy Convention

Cropredy, Oxfordshire

Fairport Convention's fab fest makes a welcome comeback.

★ Cropredy is back, and it's a scorcher in terms of temperature and line-up.

Thursday is party night with the Trevor Horn Band, the band leader joined by Lol Creme and guests for a whirl around the 70s and 80s, highlights being Steve Hogarth's emotional take on *Life On Mars?*, and an unexpectedly rocking *Are You Gonna Go My Way?* by Sunday Lunchers Toyah and Robert Fripp.

Friday brings some cool top-hatted psychedelic Americana from The Slambovian Circus Of Dreams, indie folksters Turin Brakes surprise with some stratospheric Floyd-guitar bombast, and, closing, Steve Hackett's *Seconds Out* set. There's an underwhelming sound mix to begin with, but when resolved Hackett's deft and daring improvisations and interplay with saxophonist Rob Townsend bring exhilaration after a day when we've all wilted a little.

On the Saturday, Rosalie Cunningham is a vision in velvet as she plays sharp 70s prog, psych and folk tunes, with Fairport violinist Ric Sanders joining her for the tip-top *Donovan Ellington* two-parter. Richard Thompson's set has typical bite, going from 1969s *Genesis Hall* to 2020's *If I Could Live My Life Again*. He and Iain Matthews then join Fairport for a three-hour finale, with 1971's *Full House* album played – endearingly wonkily at times – in its entirety. But that's the beauty of live music, isn't it? So good to have 'em back.

Jo Kendall

Going my way?: Fripp and Toyah take on Lenny Kravitz.

Frank Turner & The Sleeping Souls / Amigo The Devil / The Bronx

Las Vegas House Of Blues

While the supports gain new fans, the headliner phones it in.

★ Asking how many people are seeing The Bronx for the first time, frontman Matt Caughthran sees at least three quarters of those at this sold-out gig raise their hands. Which is rather disconcerting, given that these LA punks have been kicking ass for 20 years and have yet to release anything even approaching a bad album. But it's never too late to gain new fans, and tonight The Bronx do so with ease.

While there are loads of Amigo The Devil shirts in the audience, others have never even heard of this one-man band and his dark-humoured tales of life, death and tripping on acid. Again, it's never too late.

Opening with *Four Simple Words*, the headliner clearly needs no introduction. But while playing 50 states in 50 days – this being date 48 – is an astonishing feat, at least one in the audience – this writer – is less than impressed with the so-called Eton Anarchist who, we later discover, once told *The Telegraph* that "capitalism enriches everyone".

Granted, the audience is enthralled, but to these ears it's like Flogging Molly without a soul, like Billy Bragg without vitriol. Whatever helps people get by, but the likes of *Photosynthesis* appear more patronising than empowering. Vegas can usually recognise an act when it sees one.

Morat

The Stranglers

Wolverhampton KK's Steel Mill

Legendary oddballs defy expectations to the very end.

★ With the death of their keyboard player Dave Greenfield in 2020, The Stranglers announced that 2022 will see their last full tour. But if this is their final bow, they are taking it with all the idiosyncratic brilliance we've come to expect from them over the past half-century.

A rousing *Toiler On The Sea* kicks things off, setting a tone of exuberance that suits more punk-inclined material like *(Get A) Grip (On Yourself)* and *Tank*. Keyboard player Toby Hounsham ensures that Greenfield's magic isn't missing from the band's sound, while frontman Baz Warne leads the audience like the world's cheekiest ringmaster. As ever, it's Jean-Jacques Burnell, the only remaining original member, who provides the sonic bedrock, his funked-up bass lines ensuring *Nice 'N' Sleazy, White Stallion* and *Peaches* get the audience moving and grooving. From their moody post-punk take on Bacharach and David's *Walk On By*, through the strutting swagger of *Peaches* to the reflective new-wave of *Always The Sun*, laddish pub rock with *Go Buddy Go* and the closing punk blitz of *No More Heroes*, The Stranglers invariably deliver with inimitable flair.

They might be a punk rock Ship Of Theseus by this point, but The Stranglers remain a vibrant and vital live force that will be sorely missed if this run of 'final' shows ultimately really does prove to be their last.

Rich Hobson

Ginger Wildheart & Jon Poole

Hastings The Crypt

Acoustic joy for all, torment for one.

★ The double-act headliners are actually a three-piece, with sparkling piano from Carol Hodge. Hodge had earlier performed a set of wry, sad and touching ballads as opening act. When Ginger and Poole later step into the spotlights she is behind them, getting soaked by the wave of joy from the audience in response to the opening *Cheers/Taxi* medley and second song *Boxes*.

However, that wave leaves Ginger dry as toast. After 20 fabulous minutes he announces: "I'm having a mild panic attack." We all laugh because we presume he's joking; everything looks and feels so good from where we're standing. But depression tells him otherwise.

As Poole delivers an insane mini-set that peaks with a hysterical cover of Focus's yodelling classic *Hocus Pocus*, Ginger watches lovingly, as if hoping to feed on his buddy's positivity. But not long after, a demon inside Ginger inflates a tuning issue – beyond what most of us are able to detect – and he takes a break. Briefly happier, he returns to romp through *Why Aye (Oh You)* and Lindisfarne's *Run For Home*, among others, then throws down his guitar and just sings until Poole conjures a raucous finale with *I Wanna Go Where The People Go*. Witnessing an unhappy man face a joyous audience alone makes the irony painful.

Neil Jeffries

GETTY

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Killing Joke frontman (and much more) *Jaz Coleman* on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Ian Fortnam**

Killing Joke's ever imposing, ever ebullient frontman, Jaz Coleman is preparing to take a flight to Morocco. There he plans to kick back in his regular one-star Marrakesh bolt-hole for a much needed recharge prior to unleashing a fresh KJ assault in the new year. There's a Royal Albert Hall show on the horizon, and a new album, but prior to that there's the serious business of selecting for *Classic Rock* the prime examples of the music that defines him. Although, in the case of one question, he doesn't appear to fully comprehend what it is that he's being asked, admitting: "My guilty pleasure is being diabetes one, eating things I shouldn't eat, and shooting up more insulin to compensate."

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

Bach's *St Matthew's Passion*. My mother made me follow the score when I was four years old. A compilation called *Russian Orchestral Masterpieces*, with Borodin and Rimsky-Korsakov's *Night On Bald Mountain*.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

Are You Receiving? with Killing Joke on August fourth, 1979 at Witcombe Lodge, Cheltenham, with The Selecter and The Ruts. It was the first time I'd seen my colleagues on stage.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

We're from a generation that believes you can change the world through art and music; it's just entertainment to subsequent generations. And if there's one album that sums up this dream it's Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. It affected me profoundly, philosophically, and continues to affect me.

THE GUITAR HERO

Geordie Walker. He can play three guitar parts at once. I don't know anybody who can do what Geordie does. His use of resonances, it's mystifying. And there is no rhythm player quite like Geordie. His rhythm is immaculate.

THE SINGER

Alex Harvey. He had great character to his voice – you can hear a man who's lived. Bon Scott's got the same sort of thing. There's a sincerity in their voices. They're hard guys. Hard, powerful people. Alex lived hard.

THE SONGWRITER

I've got to say Ludwig van Beethoven, because he's a genius – and that's a word I use sparingly. He was deaf from the age of thirty-one, so all of his most important works were created when he was stone deaf.

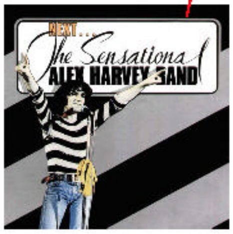
THE BEST LIVE ALBUM

Bob Marley And The Wailers' *Live!*, recorded in 1975. Especially *No Woman No Cry*. That's an example of a song where the live version is better than the studio version, and you can feel the atmosphere of history in the making.

> **"Alex Harvey had great character to his voice – you can hear a man who's lived."**

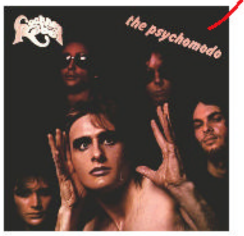
THE MOST UNDERRATED BAND EVER

The Sensational Alex Harvey Band. *Faith Healer* is out of this fucking world. Still. They played Madison Square Garden at their peak, but subsequent generations don't really know this band. So it's my pleasure to introduce this track to a different generation. It's so ahead of its time, and profoundly affected all of us in Killing Joke.



THE CULT HERO

It's got to be Steve Harley And Cockney Rebel. I first became aware of them in about 1974. I like the style of his vocals, and the orchestration and drama of their early recordings; *The Psychomodo*, all that kind of stuff. Some of it was brilliant.



MY CONDUIT FROM ORCHESTRAL TO ROCK

That's got to be Can, because Can straddled pre-punk and post-punk and it really influenced all of us. The great Can album is *Tago Mago*: esoteric in an experimental way.

THE SOUND THAT UNITES KILLING JOKE

Disco. We used to listen to Chic all the time. All four of us loved disco. There's still an element of disco in what we do, but probably not enough. But reggae and disco were the sounds that united us all, and we still listen to these genres for recreation.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT/ PARTY SONG

It would be a mixture of bands, a punky reggae party. I'd go from something like Aswad's *New Chapter Of Dub* to *Jesus Built My Hot Rod* by Ministry. Then I'd go from Nine Inch Nails to bits of Killing Joke. *Doomsday* by Discharge, then back to Culture's *Two Sevens Clash* and so forth.

MY 'IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE' SONG

When I have breakfast, my partner puts on bossa nova. And I can recommend this with breakfast. It lifts your spirit. It's out of my genre. I don't know anything about this music, but I love it for breakfast. And for love? The Gotan Project's first album *La Revancha Del Tango*. The modern form of tango is incredibly seductive.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

That has to be the only song that I like from this artist: *A Thousand Kisses Deep* by Leonard Cohen. He's looking back on the years of an artist's life, and the lyrics are just so profound on promiscuity and everything. He's reflecting back and it's just fabulous. Amazing.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

Well, I'm currently composing that, and we don't want to hurry a good thing, do we?

Tickets for Killing Joke's Royal Albert Hall show on March 12, 2023 are on sale now.

JAZ COLEMAN: ESTER SEGARRA/PRESS; ALEX HARVEY: GETTY

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